

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LEARN ORAL AND WRITTEN  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE: A CASE STUDY OF A RURAL KENYAN  
CLASSROOM

BY

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## **Abstract**

This study was an ethnographic case study that investigated oral and written language learning in a first grade classroom in Kenya. The languages used in this classroom were Swahili and English only. Kamba the mother tongue of the majority of the children, was banned in the entire school. In this classroom there were 89 children with two teachers, one a teacher of English, the other a teacher of Swahili. The children's ages ranged from five to eight years. The main participants were six focal children with their parents, the two teachers, and the school administrator. Data collection took place over a two and half month period and employed classroom participant observations, audio recording, interviewing, and collection of official documents and children's writings.

The study was guided by a sociocultural and dialogic framework which maintains that social interactions and cultural institutions (e.g. societies, schools, and classrooms) have important roles to play in a child's literacy and language development. Thus, the social life of this classroom was central to the children's literacy and language learning.

The physical, institutional, and policy contexts of this school influenced the nature of social interaction and, thereby, of the language teaching and learning that occurred. To begin, in this classroom, there was a great shortage of literacy and educational materials and space. Moreover, the school's language policy—that is, English as the language of instruction, Swahili as language of communication, and the banning of Kamba—combined with the physical context shaped the classroom's practices to a great extent.

As the teacher and the students or students interacted with each other in the classroom, they were involved in different practices or genres and this is what marked the culture of this

classroom. There were both official (i.e. teacher controlled) and unofficial practices (i.e. children controlled). On one hand, during the daily English official writing, the teacher followed the mandated curriculum, making adjustments for the lack of the textbooks (i.e., having children copy excerpts on the board). The interaction structure was traditional recitation involving much repetition of the teacher's words. On the other hand, during the Swahili official writing, reading, and speaking practices, the teacher taught with the same space and text limitations but involved the children in dialogues with her and other students through storytelling, peer guided reading, classroom talk, and drawing. In the Swahili classroom through the teacher's dialogic instruction and mediation, the children's voices were recognized and acknowledged. During writing practices the children went beyond copying off the board and drew and colored. Moreover, during unofficial curriculum, the children drew and played together. They drew, wrote, played, or sang songs which focused on their community practices or experiences, identities, and imaginations. Thus, the English conventional practices did not provide insights into the children's experiences and imaginations as the drawing, storytelling, singing, recitation of poems, and play did during Swahili lessons and during unofficial times. Therefore, drawing, storytelling, singing, recitation of poems, and play should be included in the official English curriculum.

In conclusion, this study manifested that language learning cannot be separated from its ideological, social, and physical contexts. These contexts shape language learning. Also, meaningful dialogues are important for meaningful language learning to occur. And, oral and written language develops simultaneously in a classroom setting. Lastly, written language development is supported by other media such as drawing, play, singing, etc.

In memory of Tata (my father), John Mukewa Masaku who went to be with the Lord just a few days before this work came to a conclusion. Also, in memory of Mama (my mother), Leah Muthoni Mukewa who went a little earlier. I miss you -Tata and Mama; you will forever be in my heart. I cherish the moments we shared

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To God be the glory!

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The language of our evening teach-ins, and the language of our immediate and wider community, and the language of our work in the fields were one. And then I went to school, a colonial school, and this harmony was broken. The language of my education was no longer the language of my culture. English became the language of my formal education. In Kenya, English became more than a language: it was *the* language, and all the others had to bow before it in deference. Thus one of the most humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking Gikuyu in the vicinity of the school. The culprit was given corporal punishment or was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY (Thiong'o, 1986, p. 11).

In the above excerpt, Thiong'o has given a vivid picture of Kenyan society during the 1940s when he was growing up. Before joining formal school, his home, immediate community, and work place's language was one-Gikuyu (an indigenous language); but after joining formal school this changed abruptly. The school did not use his home language anymore; it used English only. If one spoke in the home language, he or she was severely punished.

Kenya gained its political independence in 1963, but the picture which Thiong'o has painted in the 40s was the same picture I saw at Kalimani (pseudonym) Primary School (i.e. the site of the current study) after 47 years of independence. Schoolchildren in this rural primary school (grades 1-8) were punished for using their home language at school. It was an offence to speak Kamba, their indigenous language, in the school compound. However, the situation at Kalimani Primary School is one case of a phenomenon that is going on in many postcolonial countries globally (Kachru, 1986; Lin, 2001; Ndayipfukamiye, 2001; Pennycook, 1994, 1998; Rubdy, 2008; Sandel, 2000; Schneider, 2007; Vaish, 2008). In many of these postcolonial settings, a colonial language (e.g. English in Kenya) is used as the language of communication and instruction in the education system.



## **Indigenous languages, Swahili, and English in Kenyan Schools**

Kenya has over 40 indigenous languages (Abdulaziz, 1982). These indigenous languages are grouped into Bantu, Nilotic and Cushitic languages. The Bantu languages include Kamba, Gikuyu, Embu, Mijikenda, Swahili, and Luhya. Kalenjin, Luo, and Masai are some of the Nilotic languages, while Somali, Rendile, and Orma are some of the Cushitic languages.

Swahili was declared the national language in Kenya in 1974 (Mbaabu, 1996). It is a language that unifies the large multicultural Kenyan society. During struggle for freedom, Swahili unified Kenyan people. Therefore, Swahili language has been used as a mark of Kenyan national identity. A majority of Kenyans speak Swahili. In fact, every Kenyan is supposed to speak Swahili. Therefore, if anyone wants to become a Kenyan citizen he or she must learn Swahili. Chapter VI Section 93 of the constitution requires that all people seeking Kenyan citizenship must satisfy the immigration minister that they have adequate knowledge of Swahili.

Thiong'o (1986) states that the indigenous languages were the languages through which children learned the cultural values of their communities and appreciated the beauty and the power of their languages before the onset of colonialism in Kenya. However, with advent of colonialism this situation changed. Kenya was declared a British protectorate in 1895 (Sheffield, 1973; Moraa, 2005). This marked the onset of colonial domination and the introduction of the English language in Kenya and the marginalization of indigenous languages in the country. Since then English has been the official language in Kenya. This means that all of the official matters in the country are carried out in English. It is important to note that English is not an indigenous language to a majority of the Kenyan population. Only the few who have gone through the formal school system have knowledge of English.

In addition, the devaluation of indigenous languages in education in Kenya was further enhanced with Kenya's attainment of independence in 1963 (Bunyi, 1996). The first educational commission in independent Kenya, the Ominde commission (which will be discussed in detail in chapter 4), recommended that English be the medium of instruction in schools from grade 1, and that Swahili be one of the compulsory subjects in primary schools. Indigenous languages were not given any academic role then.

Since then, indigenous languages have been assigned some academic roles but, as I observed at Kalimani Primary school, this policy is not followed in many schools. The current language policy in primary schools is well put by Sure (1998):

- i. For the first three years the child receives education through a mother-tongue medium whereas English and Swahili are introduced as subjects from the first year. However, for schools in multilingual settings the medium of instruction is either English or Swahili, depending on the dominant language of the catchment area.
- ii. From fourth year the medium of instruction shifts from mother tongue to English for the rest of the education system; mother tongue ceases to be used as a school language whereas Swahili continues to be taught as a compulsory subject up to end of secondary school (12th grade). English also continues to be taught as a compulsory subject up to the end of secondary school (p. 193).

Therefore, Kenya's national language policy is what appears to be trilingual (i.e. using mother tongues, Swahili, and English) in primary schools (Mbaabu, 1996), but in reality it is bilingual (use of Swahili and English) or even monolingual (use of English only) because most stakeholders want the children to be exposed as early as possible to English. For example, at Kalimani, the language of instruction and communication was English in grades 4-8. English was officially the language of instruction in grades 1-3; however, as I observed in grade 1, English and Swahili were the languages of instruction. Swahili was officially the language of communication in grades 1-3. Next, I provide some background information on Kenya's education.

## **Background Information on Kenya's Education**

Kenya has an education system commonly known as the 8-4-4 system. The system comprises of 8 years of primary education, 4 years of secondary education and a minimum of 4 years of university education. Progression from primary to secondary school and from secondary to university is through selection on the basis of performance in the national examinations for the Kenya Certificate of Education (KCPE) and the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE), which are in English, apart from the Swahili examinations which are in Swahili. The selective manner of progression between levels is a clear indication that not all students who complete the primary course have the opportunity to pursue further education. For instance, according to the Ministry of Education's (1999) statistics, only an average of 45% of the primary school pupils who take the KCPE examination are selected for entry into high school. The students who are not selected for high school entry some join village polytechnics, repeat primary grade or join the job market.

Scholastic progression, which is a measure of movement from one grade or level to another (Ministry of education, 1999), nationally, from primary to secondary stood at 44.8% in 1999. Concerning the level of education completed, the census results in 1999 indicated that 75.5% of the total population aged 5 years and over had completed some level of education. While 24.6% did not complete any level of education in 1999. According to the Multiple Indicator Survey (Ministry of Education, 2000), the majority (73.7%) of the population aged over 15 years was literate.

Grade repetition (which is generally associated with poor performance) is very common in Kenya. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Education (1999), repetition was in the range of 13% to 16% in grades 1-6, 18% to 19% in grade 7 and less than 5% in grade 8. The

higher rate of repetition in grade 7 reflected the fact that students often repeat grade 7 in order to improve their performance on the KCPE to be admitted into good high schools.

Overall, the average dropout rate in each primary school grade is 3.2%, for both boys and girls. It increases from 2.7% in grade 1 to 5.2% in grade 7, the year before KCPE is taken (Ministry of Education, 1999). Children in Kenya drop out of primary schools for several reasons. According to the 1995 Primary School Census, the most common reason given for dropping out of primary school (given as 19%) was because of parents' ignorance or illiteracy. Poverty was cited in 13% of the cases as being important, while poor academic performance of the students was cited in 6.5% of the cases. Among girls, marriage and pregnancy were very important reasons for dropping out (cited in 13.5% of the cases) (Ministry of Education, 1999).

With this language situation and education background in Kenya, the current study examined English and Swahili learning, though by and large it focuses on English learning. Initially, when the study began my intentions were to examine only English learning. However, because of what I observed in the Swahili classroom I decided to include Swahili learning as well. This was because, as will be discussed in chapter 7, the Swahili classroom had different dynamics as opposed to the English classroom, though Swahili was a second language to the Kalimani children. Also, I studied what the children were doing in the unofficial moments (i.e. child-controlled times). This allowed me to see what the children were doing at those times when they took agency of their learning. Moreover, I hoped that by showing what was happening in the official Swahili classroom, and the unofficial times, may be borrowed in other Kenyan language classrooms in an effort to provide more meaningful language learning and teaching. These will be discussed in the chapters to come. I now state the problem and purpose of this study.

## **Problem Statement and Purpose of the Study**

As a student and a teacher, I have always wondered how little children learn how to speak, read, and write. The children learning to speak, read, and write in languages that are not native to them complicate this puzzle. At least, if it is their first language that they hear while in the womb or immediately when they are born, it is imaginable. This is because a first language is the language the child communicates with and interacts in when he/she is born. The child also plays in this language and more important thinks and imagines in this language. It is out of this curiosity that I investigated how first grade Kenyan rural children whose first language was Kamba learned to speak and write in English and Swahili in a public school. Most of the Kenyan students are forced to speak English and Swahili in schools. Furthermore, I wondered how Kenyan children learn in such adverse conditions.

A number of language studies that have been done in Kenyan classrooms have focused primarily on language use and practices (Abdulaziz, 1982; Acker & Hardman, 2001; Bunyi, 2001, 1999; Cleghorn, Marilyn, & Abagi, 1989; Hungi & Thuku, 2009; Jones, 2008; Muaka, 2008; Mwanzi, 1983; Pontefract & Hardman, 2005). Also, language studies done elsewhere in other African classrooms like Burundi (Ndayipfukamiye, 2001), Botswana (Arthur, 2001), South Africa (Stein, 2001; Prinsloo & Stein, 2004), and Tanzania (Wedin, 2010) have looked at language use and practices as well. To my knowledge, none of these studies have looked into details on how children develop both oral and written English and Swahili languages. Moreover, none of these studies have been ethnographic case studies in classrooms like the current study. An ethnographic case study looks at the details of the case (Stake, 1995). To guide me in investigating how Kenyan children develop oral and written language, I used a sociocultural and dialogic view as my lenses.

## **Theoretical Framework: Sociocultural and Dialogic**

According to a sociocultural view, higher psychological processes, such as oral and written language have their foundations in social processes that occur on an interpsychological plane, that is, between people, and that are mediated through language signs, symbols, actions, and objects (Vygotsky, 1978). Through children's repeated participation in activities (Miller & Goodnow, 1995) like speaking and writing with more knowledgeable others, they transform specific means for realizing them into individual knowledge and capabilities (Gillen & Hall, 2003; Hall & Walsh, 2002; Rogoff, 2003; Wertsch, 1979, 1991). Hence, children develop as speakers and writers through repeated participation in speaking and writing activities with the help of knowledgeable others and in the company of peers (Dyson, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978).

In addition, a sociocultural approach to writing rejects the notion of equating writing to material texts or acts of inscription (Christie, 2003; Dyson, 2003; Fox, 2003; Gillen & Hall, 2003; Rowe, 1994). Rather, a sociocultural approach sees writing as chains of brief or lengthier representations of ideas (Samway, 2006). Also according to a sociocultural view, writing and speaking involve dialogic processes of creation. Both oral and written texts as artifacts in activity, and the inscription of linguistic signs or speaking words are parts of a flow of mediated, distributed, and multimodal activities (Prior, 2001).

Moreover, a dialogic view according to Bakhtin (1981, 1986) states that each utterance, oral or written, is influenced and shaped by past conversations and utterances in which speakers or writers have taken part, as well as by the responses and utterances that are anticipated will follow. Children become language users by appropriating voices around them (Dyson, 2003). These voices include those of different languages like those of Kalimani children. Children, therefore, from a dialogic view develop as speakers and writers by appropriating voices that

encircle them (Dyson, 2003, 2008; Dyson & Smitherman, 2009; Marsh, 2003). The children's spoken and written words are filled with dialogic nuances, because they use thoughts and texts to carry on conversations with their addressees (Bakhtin, 1981) or imagined readers and themselves as well (Englert, Mariage, & Dunsmore, 2001).

Sociocultural and dialogic theory also points out that language and literacy are context-dependent (Lindfors, 1999). For example, the social, physical, and ideological contexts of the classroom, "provide the resources for and also the constraints of interaction" (Lindfors, 1999, p. 276). In the current study the social, physical, and ideological contexts shaped the classroom interactions and practices.

Therefore, in looking at how children develop oral and written English and Swahili languages, sociocultural and dialogic views value children's social relations, voices, and the contexts that surround them. A dialogic view in particular reminds us that the social tools like the language that school literacy practices employ are forever political and ideological and thus may serve the interest of just a part of a society and leave the majority outside.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided this study. These questions examined how first grade children participated in speaking and writing practices in English and Swahili in a Kenyan rural school. In other words, what does it mean for them, their parents, and teachers to learn English and Swahili languages in a Kenyan rural school?

1. How is Kenyan national language policy enacted in the classroom?

1a) What languages are used in this classroom?

1b) How do different languages, both written and spoken, intersect in the classroom?

i) What is the role of English?

- ii) What is the role of Swahili?
  - iii) What is the role of the mother tongue?
- 2. How is the official language curriculum expressed in the classroom?
  - 2a) In what ways is spoken and written English and Swahili taught and learned?
    - i) What pedagogical approaches do the teachers use in the classroom, in responding to students?
    - ii) What instructional materials are available to the students?
  - 2b) How is written and spoken language assessed in the classroom?
    - i) Who is a good or a bad writer according to the teachers and peers?
    - ii) Who is a good or a bad speaker according to the teachers and peers?
- 3. How do children participate in the official speaking and writing activities?
  - 3a) How are different media used in this classroom?
    - i) What is the role of drawing?
    - ii) What is the role of peer talk?
    - iii) What is the role of Kenyan's cultural resources of songs/riddles/proverbs?
    - iv) What is the role of storytelling?
    - v) What is the role of play?
  - 3b) What is the nature of teacher-child relationship during speaking and writing activities?
- 4. What are teachers', parents', administrator's, and children's guiding ideologies about language?
  - 4a) What are the learners' perceptions towards English language instructions, both oral



and written?

- 4b) What are the learners' perceptions towards mother tongue and Swahili?
- 4c) What are the teachers' perceptions towards learning and teaching of English?
- 4d) What are the teachers' perceptions towards mother tongue and Swahili?
- 4e) What are parents' perceptions towards English, mother tongue, and Swahili?
- 4f) What are the administrator's perceptions towards English, mother tongue, and Swahili?

5. What are the influences of Kenyan's language policy and practices (i.e. using English only as a medium of instruction from grade 4 upwards and punishment in home language use) in 2- 4 above?

## **Overview of Chapters**

In this chapter I introduced the current study. To situate the study, I presented some background information on the language situation and education in Kenya. I then stated the problem and purpose of the study, noting that my goal was to learn how Kenyan children learned English and Swahili which were second languages to them. Also, I compared the study with studies which have been done in Kenya and Africa. In addition, I discussed the sociocultural and dialogic theoretical framework whose reference I make in data analysis and in the discussion of findings. Finally, I introduced the research questions that guided the study. Chapter 2 presents a review of relevant literature. Chapter 3 is a discussion of the method used to conduct this study. Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 present the major findings of the study. Chapter 4 examines relevant national education documents. Chapter 5 is a discussion of the ideological, social, and physical contexts. Chapter 6 discusses the official English curriculum. Chapter 7 discusses the official

Swahili curriculum. Chapter 8 discusses the unofficial curriculum. Chapter 9 is the final chapter which gives a summary, discussion, and implications of the findings in research and teaching.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

In this chapter I begin by reviewing literature on language policy and ideology in Kenya. Having set this ideological frame, I will look more closely at the literature on language learning within classroom cultures. Finally, to pave the way in the “unofficial” social world of the children (Dyson, 1993), I consider the role of play, stories and other symbolic media in oral and written language learning. I consider such a multi-faceted review of literature as important because all of these themes bear a significant impact on the development of oral and written language among Kenyan children. These themes are reviewed below.

#### **Language Policy and Ideology in Kenya**

There is a bias towards strengthening the development, learning, and use of English at the expense of other languages in Kenya. This situation is well elaborated by Thiong'o in his opening quote in the introduction. The effect of this has been an untimely introduction of English as a medium of instruction even in some rural schools (e.g. Kalimani Primary School) with linguistically homogeneous populations (Sure, 1998; Mazrui, 2002). This has sometimes been demanded by parents (Jones, 2008) but in other cases some head teachers (e.g. at Kalimani) and school boards have determined their own local language policies making English the only school language (Mazrui, 2002).

It has been observed that to acquire English language in Kenya is like going through a linguistic rebirth (Kachru, 1986). If any Kenyan does not speak English then his or her chances of upward mobility are limited. English is a symbol of power, authority and elitism in Kenya (Muthwii, 2004). The supremacy of English in Kenya resides in the domains of its use (e.g. government offices and judiciary), the roles its users play in society (e.g. leaders in government

and judiciary), and people's positive attitude towards it. Given this high status, therefore, English acquisition diminishes the value of all local languages. During the colonial era, all local languages lost the battle for prestige and power to English (Mbaabu, 1996; Thiong'o, 1986). English maintained its power even after the colonial period ended in Kenya in 1963 (Mazrui, 2002; Muthwii, 2004). This is supported by the already stated fact that it is associated with upward mobility and advancement by Kenyans who possess it as a linguistic device. Any achievement in spoken or written English is highly rewarded in education and the job market. Moreover, English can function as a marker of intelligence and a gatekeeper that restricts access to learning (Muthwii, 2004; Thiong'o, 1986). For example, Thiong'o (1986) writes of a primary school boy who received distinctions in all content areas but English and was denied promotion to high school.

Mwanzi (1983) did a study in ten rural schools in the Western province of Kenya and found out that learning in English was imposed by adults on children for the purpose of achieving certain economic, social, and political ends. Mwanzi's study established that Kenyan society generally regards mastery of English as a sign of being educated. The current study questioned such language imposition on schoolchildren. This is because before beginning school, the majority of the children in rural Kenya do not have any access to English. They access it for the first time in grade 1. The grade 1 teacher starts on a "clean slate" as far as English is concerned (Mwanzi, 1983). The English only medium of instruction in Kenyan schools may have negative impact on some students. Some of them are not fluent in English even after several years in school and are made to repeat grades in the hope that they will become fluent in the English language. However, repetition of grades does not always guarantee this. A case in point is the Kalimani School where I did this study; there were three children who were made to repeat

first grade because they could not perform at the grade level. Generally, this originated from language issues because they could not read in English.

In most of those schools where Mwanzi did her study, the teachers, in an effort to ensure that English fluency and competence was attained very fast, taught more hours (just like in Kalimani) and punished those who spoke in mother tongues. Also, at Kalimani the children in grades 1-8 were punished by being hit with a stick on their hands and buttocks or punished by kneeling down if they spoke in their mother tongues. Therefore, speaking in Kenyan local languages apart from Swahili has stopped in most Kenyan schools. English language is pushing Kenyan people especially children away from themselves, hence their identities, from their world to other worlds, hence colonization of this population's minds (Thiong'o, 1986).

Although English is an adored and a privileged code in Kenyan schools and society, it also faces challenges (Kioko & Muthwii, 2004). For example, in nine out of ten of the schools in Mwanzi's study there was shortage of reading materials like class readers and textbooks. This concurs with Bunyi's (2001) and Pontefract and Hardman's (2005) studies where the rural schools they studied in Central and Rift Valley provinces in Kenya respectively did not have enough resources for English literacy. Therefore, it seems that rural schools' shortage of English language and literacy resources is a major problem which needs to be addressed by the government and any other relevant bodies. The current study questioned the implication of the shortage of English language and literacy materials given that the rural children do not get any English oral practice from home and the community in general. In fact, at Kalimani there was a great shortage of English textbooks and readers. In addition, the school did not have library.

Therefore, in looking at the above discussion it is clear that there is linguistic and cultural enslavement in Kenya (Mazrui, 1996, 2002). Most of the cultural and linguistic enslavement is

perpetuated partly through the education system and mainly through the inherited colonial language ideologies (Mbaabu, 1996). English language as already mentioned is used as a medium of instruction and communication in the education system of Kenya. It is important to state that such language practices and policy in Kenya were examined because although the concerned stakeholders may think they are empowering the Kenyan children by using English as early as possible, they may be indirectly disempowering the children because language is not just language; it comes with its cultural baggage. The children may lose their identity and pride as Kenyans! For instance, a child may be ashamed to speak his or her mother tongue. It is in such a context that I situated the current study which examined the classroom processes through what voice and culture were heard, developed, and promoted in this rural Kenyan classroom.

### **Language Learning in Classroom Cultures**

As we have seen in the above discussion, it seems a majority of Kenyans are suffering from the “English exposure myth” (Soltero, 2004). This myth maintains, “Language minority children must be exposed to great amounts of English to become proficient in that language. Moreover, instruction in the native language has been considered a hindrance for the acquisition of English” (Soltero, 2004, p. 50). However, studies have rejected this myth and have shown that the use of native language does not interfere with English learning but helps in second language development and learning (August & Hakuta, 1998; Cummins, 2005; Edelsky, 1986; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Hudelson, 2005; Wu, 2008). For example, reading and writing skills acquired initially through first language (L1) provide a foundation upon which strong second language development (e.g. English) may be built (Cummins, 2005). In addition, research on bilingual development provides consistent evidence for transfer of academic skills and knowledge across languages (Nieto, 2002). Thus, second language learners bring an additional

set of linguistic and cultural resources and experiences (August & Shanahan, 2006; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005), which are related to L1 oral proficiency and literacy.

Therefore, genuine recognition or institutionalization of children's L1 and culture in the schools is important for schools to communicate a sense of pride and affirmation of children's L1 and cultural background instead of shame and punishment for any use of their L1 in the school context. Hymes states:

Children may be "linguistically deprived" if the language of their natural competence is not of the school; if the contexts that elicit or permit use of that competence are absent in the school; if the purpose to which they put language, and the ways in which they do so, are absent or prohibited in the school. The situation of the children, indeed, is much worse than "deprivation" if the normal competence is punished in the school (1972, p. xxi).

It is a concern that some children in Kenya like in Kalimani are still punished for using their L1 at school. This makes children ashamed of their language and identity. In fact, most of my former classmates in primary school were punished for speaking Kamba (L1) in school as well. My classmates and I grew up not appreciating Kamba language because we associated it with punishment and humiliation. Also, national examinations are all written in English (except Swahili); there are no examinations in children's L1 (Muthwii, 2002).

The failure in Kenya to examine mother tongues has adverse effects. For instance, in Jones' (2008) study in Mt. Elgon region showed that, although some teachers recognized the benefits of using mother tongue for instructional purposes, they encountered significant drawbacks in implementing mother tongue as a language of instruction. Since the language of textbooks and examination was English, parental pressure was great on the teachers, that is, parents complained if they saw a lot of Sabao (mother tongue) in the children's exercise books. Moreover, in Muthwii's study (2002), in rural schools students were seen as making unwanted

decisions if they used their L1 even in their informal interactions. Some teachers used a “disc system” to reinforce speaking of English and Swahili in informal interactions. By the end of the day, whoever had “the disc” was punished. The students reported that whether the disc system was reinforced or not, they were ordered to use English and Swahili inside and outside the classroom while in school. It is important in English-medium classrooms, like in Kenya, to communicate positive messages to students and parents about the value of the home languages and to encourage its development. In addition, research shows within a bilingual program, instructional time can be focused on developing students’ literacy skills in their primary language without adverse effects on the development of their literacy skills in English or other second languages (Baker, 2000; Cummins, 2005).

### **Classroom Cultures**

Saville-Troike (1984) sees culture as including “all of the rules for appropriate behavior which are learned by people as a result of being members of the group or community, and also the values and beliefs which underlie overt behaviors and are themselves shared products of group membership” (p.1). Therefore, in any classroom, there are both written and unwritten rules which every classroom member must follow to make the classroom carry out its practices and be able to produce products in the long run.

Furthermore, classroom culture may be seen as the practices of teachers and students interacting within the classroom (Erickson, 2007). Practices are actions, which are recurring and shared by a social group like the classroom (Miller & Goodnow, 1995). In fact, classrooms are seen as “cultural communities” (Bloome, 2008, p. 251) within which teachers and students constantly negotiate shared values and expectations concerning different classroom activities and



more important, how spoken and written languages are to be used in the classroom (Bloome, 2008).

In many classrooms, for instance at Kalimani, the classroom culture is enacted through the classroom interactions. The prevalent classroom interaction in most classrooms in many parts of the world including Kenya (Acker & Hardman, 2001; Cleghorn, Merritt, & Abagi, 1989; Pontefract & Hardman, 2005) is the teacher- student interaction pattern, commonly known as IRE (Initiate – Respond – Evaluate) discourse pattern (Mehan, 1979). Cazden (2001) refers to this as a “default setting,” or traditional teacher-student interaction; without deliberate attention to one’s language and patterns of interacting with students, teachers will default back to this way of talking.

The IRE interaction pattern, which Nystrand (1997) calls recitation, involves the teacher asking a question of the students to which the teacher usually knows the answer, and the students are expected to provide a brief but correct answer to the question, and then the teacher evaluates whether it is correct or not. Each turn of interaction usually involves one student at a time with the teacher moving on to ask another student once she/he has evaluated the prior student (Cazden, 2001; Hall & Walsh, 2002; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). Studies have shown that extended use of recitation limits students’ opportunities to expand their ideas because the teacher does most of the talking and the teacher more often controls the interaction instead of the students learning a lesson’s content (Alexander, 2000; Cazden, 2001; Hall & Walsh, 2002; Nystrand, 1997; Pontefract & Hardman, 2005). Through interactions with each other, teachers and students construct a common body of knowledge and culture (Hall & Walsh, 2002). Hence, the language of the classroom culture is not something that can be considered separately from the accounts of language interactions and learning among classroom members; rather the language

of classroom culture is what organizes and gives meaning to interactions and learning (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2001).

Cazden (2001) states that the teacher and students are enacting culture at the moment of classroom interactions although the teacher has a lot of power as compared to students. The teacher for example, decides who to speak and when, what topic to be covered in class and so forth. For example, in Pontefract and Hardman's (2005) quantitative study that looked at the discourse of classrooms in English, Math, and Science lessons in five urban and four rural primary schools in Kenya, the teacher decided when the students were to participate and dominated most of the classroom talk. Also, in Cleghorn, Merritt, and Abagi's (1989) study of a Science lesson on parasites and water cycle in grade 8, the teacher dominated the lesson with recitation routines in the classroom. Further, Bunyi (2001), in her Kenyan rural grade 1 English language reading lesson study observed that the teacher relied on recitation in the classroom. She comments that some children chanted after the teacher without looking at the text. These studies were important to the current study because they expanded my knowledge on classroom interactions in Kenya. However, the current study was different because it was an ethnographic case study which examined concerns, conditions, and moment-to-moment interactions that constitute oral and written English and Swahili learning.

Moreover, Arthur's (2001) Botswana and Ndayipfukamiye's (2001) Burundi primary school classroom interactions studies revealed excessive use of recitation in these African classrooms. These two studies informed the current study because they were carried out in African settings which have the same history as Kenya of using a foreign language as the medium of instruction. Botswana's language of instruction is English while Burundi's is French, both of which are foreign languages.

Furthermore, in Alexander's (2000) study on cultural pedagogy in several Indian classrooms, he observed that the teachers controlled all the classroom interactions by deciding who to ask and answer questions. The teachers in the Indian classrooms also asked questions which they knew the answers, that is, display or pseudo questions. Also in Sahni's (2001) Indian classroom study during what she called "observation phase" she observed that the teacher controlled all the events in the classroom, and the children were very passive in their learning. Writing in that classroom was "mechanical transcription of letters" (p. 21). These studies on India were important to the current study because Indian setting is very much similar to Kenyan's because of the colonial history- British colonized both countries.

### **Diverse Classroom Interactions and Their Role in Language Learning**

Vygotsky (1978) views communication with other people as an important ingredient in young children's expanding capabilities of language. Within the context of culturally valued activities, adults, for example, parents and potentially teachers provide the names of items, give instructions and suggestions, and gradually reduce the level of their language help as children become more competent participants in social life, including users of language (Moll & Whitmore, 1993). Vygotsky (1978) describes a zone of proximal development to describe the role of the adult or expert other. The zone "... is the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). According to Vygotsky, classroom instruction should occur in the zone between the child's independent level and the level at which he or she uses language when in dialogue with adults or capable peers. Hence, the zone of proximal development provides a strong explanation for the role of the adult (e.g a teacher) in language development and learning.

Using the zone of proximal development notion, we may, therefore, envision the language teacher revitalizing the child to go a step beyond his or her current functioning and to extend language levels within the zone of proximal development (Pflaum, 1986). It is therefore, important that every language teacher establishes the zone of proximal development of her/his students to know how to help them in their language learning as contextualized within child-sensible activities. For a teacher to establish the zone of proximal development of each student this calls for a teacher to vary their interaction patterns with their students. With large classes like in Kenya (Pontefract & Hardman, 2005; Bunyi, 1999), including my project site (i.e. 89 children in a class) this can be done by letting the other students work in groups as a teacher interacts with individual students. This is where training is crucial for all teachers to know how to vary language instruction according to each student's needs. The teacher's role must be that of mediating "so that through their own efforts children assume full control of diverse purposes and uses of oral and written language" (Moll & Whitmore, 1993, p. 21). Teacher's mediation is only possible through meaningful dialogic interactions in the classroom. Bakhtin states that "language lives only in the dialogic interaction of those who make use of it" (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 130). Dialogues in the classroom interactions, then, play a crucial role in language learning. Hence, there is need for all language teachers and other educators to ensure that there are ongoing dialogues in their language classrooms.

To ensure ongoing dialogues in the language classrooms, teachers need to be good listeners to their children (Cazden, 2001; Paley, 1986). Paley (1986) suggests that teachers listen to their students with curiosity to learn more from their stories to be able to know what the students are concerned with or interested in or, alternatively, simply to know what is happening to their lives. For example, Delpit (2002) had spent a lot of time in schools which were

dominantly African American; she heard girls discussing hairdressing and, because of this listening to the students, Delpit and the relevant teachers included the theme of hairdressing in science, math, history, and language arts. The students were able to work on something they loved. This was possible through listening to the students. Thus, Delpit illustrates a culturally responsive effort and being sensitive to the African Americans' students' needs (Commins & Miramontes, 2005). In this case, students' diversity was used as a productive resource (Janks, 2008), and the students were able to connect with the classroom's work and take some agency in their own learning.

Therefore, after looking at the literature on diverse classroom interactions, the current study was interested in observing the different interaction patterns that the Kenyan classroom engaged in and also the role of the teacher in the classroom interactions and practices. In fact, it was through the dynamic interactions in the Swahili classroom that I decided to include discussion on Swahili teaching and learning as well. The Swahili teacher's way of mediation of language learning was very different from the English teacher's. Through the Swahili teacher's mediation style of language, diverse dialogic interactions were invoked in the classroom as opposed to monologic interactions which were prevalent in the English classroom.

### **Written Language in Children's Worlds: The Role of Play and Stories**

One of the ways to give students access and voice/power in the language classroom is through allowing play and narrating/listening to stories. Vygotsky emphasized the importance of playing with rules and roles, stating that play "creates its own zone of proximal development of the child. In play a child is always above his average age, above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself" (1978, p. 102). Vygotsky suggested that in play, children enjoy ignoring the regular uses of objects and actions in order to subordinate them to

imaginary meanings and situations. Children play with the meanings of serious life, but place these meanings and rules at the center of their attention. For instance, two sisters focus on the rules of sisterhood as they “play sisters” (Vygotsky, 1978). In the current study, I explored how play even though it was not a central part of the official curriculum was employed in children’s oral and written language development.

Furthermore, all students have a story to tell about their lives or their daily encounters (Dyson & Genishi, 1994; Stein, 2001). Stein did a study in a South African grade five English classroom where the students appropriated the African oral storytelling, performance traditions, and their home languages in the language classroom. This study informed the current study because I explored how the African resource of narrative may be used by the children in the classroom whether or not explicitly sanctioned by the teacher.

In addition, Gallas (1994) states that for children, meaning is built into stories; they use narratives to construct mental models of their experience, to make the world they live in sensible (Genishi & Fassler, 1999). Children’s narratives like play, if exposed in the context of the language classroom, can be powerful media for thinking and learning language. Children’s narratives are not naturally confined to the spoken or written word. Early in childhood, children tell stories in dramatic play, drawings, and songs. Therefore, providing opportunities for creative action gives children a chance to talk about themselves and their apprehensions (Genishi & Fassler, 1999). Hence, it is important to utilize “funds of knowledge” of the children in the classroom.

For instance, in the Martinez-Roldan (2003) study, one second grade student by the name Isabela, a new immigrant, from Mexico was able to use narratives in the classroom’s group discussions. Isabela’s use of narratives and storytelling (a fund of knowledge from her family)

enabled her to participate in literacy events in school. Moreover, Monzo and Rueda (2003) show how students were able to share a variety of stories from their childhood in their language classrooms. This allowed the students to relate their learning with their prior experiences and knowledge. Children's stories built relationships among children, hence, formed a community of language learners. In these classrooms where Martinez-Roldan and Monzo and Rueda conducted their studies, the children were allowed to use their first languages and these studies show how home languages are important in promoting narration. Because narratives are part of the local culture where the school I studied was located, I examined how this fund of knowledge was utilized in this Kenyan classroom.

### **Childhood Relationships and Oral and Written Language Development**

Children learn words from other people in different kinds of communicative practices (Rogoff, 1990). For this reason, children's words are always borrowed words from other people (Bakhtin, 1986). Any present utterance or turn at speaking or writing has meaning because it echoes utterances that have come before and anticipates those that will come later (Bakhtin, 1981). The idea of borrowing words from other people was important for the current study because the participants in the current study came to school with no exposure to English at all (Bunyi, 2001; Jones, 2008; Mwanzi, 1983). It was fascinating to find how these children developed oral and written English language.

Writing is a social phenomenon (Dyson, 1989, 1993; Scribner & Cole, 2001). Children come to appreciate the reasons why people use writing by watching the people around them engage in writing. Adults also encourage children to write for different purposes (e.g. grocery lists and birthday notes) (Calkins, 1994). An adult helps the child accomplish what the child cannot individually write alone (Hudelson, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978). For example, in Hudelson's

study of Spanish speaking children she gives an example of a child who at first used vowels only, but with the help of the teacher he was able to use consonants and eventually developed texts which were more conventional. In Hudelson's study, the children were learning how to write in Spanish; the present study sought to show how a teacher's mediation may help Kenyan English and Swahili language learners learn to write in English and Swahili.

In addition, in Dyson's (1989, 1997, 2000, 2003) studies, American children in culturally diverse urban classrooms developed written language in the company of supportive teachers and peers. Writing was a kind of symbolic tool (Genishi & Dyson, 2009) that mediated children's experiences and interactions. Therefore, the imaginative worlds that children built on paper were embedded in their social worlds, and both played central roles in children's writing development just like in Meier's (2000) and Dutro et al's (2004) American classroom studies. In the Kenyan setting, I sought to see how writing served as a mediator of children's relationships.

### **Children's Written Language Development in Their Symbolic Repertoires**

Written language must find a place in the symbolic repertoires of children. Their existant reportaires allow them to participate in diverse ways with different resources in the development of written language. These activities include drawing pictures, dictating stories, singing etc.

As argued in Dyson (2003), children's written language is often seen as developing along a linear line from squiggles or mock writing to inventing spelling (Read, 1975), and finally to readable, extended and intricate texts (Ballenger, 1999). This linear order conceals the fundamental function of children's symbolic repertoires in children's written language development. In the sea of these symbolic repertoires, a child finds a reason for using print (Genishi & Dyson, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978).



Therefore, written language's development is linked in complex ways to the whole of children's symbolic repertoires (Dyson, 1982, 1992). The accompanying talk, drawing and gestures make the children's letter-like marks or scribbles meaningful (Dyson, 1982, 1992). In this regard, Hubbard (1996) observed that children in her own American classroom were involved in different practices as they learned how to write. They were involved in different symbol systems, for example, written language, drawing, and music. Gallas (1994) too, a first grade teacher with linguistically and culturally diverse students like Kenya's, describes a lesson on insects and their life cycles and details how painting, music, movement, drama, poetry, and storytelling became part of the children's entire repertoire as learners. In this study I examined how Kenyan children employed different symbolic repertoires including singing and performance during their unofficial times as they learned language; this use was not officially supported in the English curriculum, but to some extent was encouraged in the Swahili curriculum.

In this regard, Prinsloo and Stein (2004) did a study in four different centers in South Africa and realized that the classrooms did not involve the whole of the child's symbolic repertoires, but an activity like singing was treated as a filler to transition from one classroom activity to another or to silence the children.

In conclusion, in learning to speak or write children do not simply imitate adult models (Dyson, 1989), but they actively construct and figure out oral and written language, just as they do other sorts of symbolic systems like drawing, making it sensible from their point of view (Clay, 1975; Dyson, 1989). Hence, I was interested in seeing how Kenyan children made sense of their learning and also examined what role the teachers and classmates played in their learning.

## **Summary**

This chapter focused on the literature which was of interest to this study. I first discussed language policy and ideology in Kenya which showed that English is favored in Kenya because of its socio, economic, and political status. Local languages in Kenya apart from Swahili are given a low profile in the country. This ushered in the discussion of the role of first languages (e.g. Kenyan local languages) in second language acquisition (e.g. English). This literature made it clear that first languages have a crucial role to play in classroom second language learning and does not hinder second language learning. Next, I discussed classroom culture itself, which is manifested through classroom interactions like IRE and dialogic interactions. IRE as a dominant classroom interaction structure has shortcomings, like the drowning of students' voices. I discussed the importance of dialogic interactions which nurture and promote students' voices. Next, I discussed the role of play, stories, and relationships in children's oral and written language development. Play, stories, and relationships are important as children learn language; moreover, children's entire symbolic repertoire, including drawing, gestures, singing, etc., also relate to and support early written language development.

In the next chapter I discuss the methodology used in this study.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

This study was a qualitative study, specifically an ethnographic case study. My research questions were suited for qualitative research. Qualitative research uses an approach that attempts to understand the meaning of events and interactions to people in particular situations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). For the current study, I strove to understand the meanings contextualizing and enacted through the children's oral and written language instruction and use. Qualitative researchers do not assume that they recognize what activities or things, for instance, oral and written language, mean to the people they are studying. They stress the social aspects of people's activities and performances. They attempt to gain entry into the conceptual world of their participants to understand how and what meaning they construct around various events in their daily lives. For example through participant observation and interviewing, I was entering my participants' worlds to understand what meaning they gave to oral and written language learning.

In addition, qualitative researchers suggest that there are multiple ways and realities of interpreting experiences and activities for each person (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). People create different realities through interacting with one another, and that it is the meaning of their practices and activities that represent their realities (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Therefore, reality is socially constructed. For example, in the case of my participants, other people (e.g. teachers and friends) who they interacted with in the course of their oral and written language learning shaped the meaning they gave to their language learning in one way or another. I was looking for these diverse realities of language learning which the participants put forward and portrayed in their oral and written language daily experiences.

The data in this study were, therefore, an outcome of a qualitative approach. The data manifest different realities that were socially constructed and interpreted.

### **Site and Participants**

My study site was a public rural primary school in the Eastern province of Kenya. This school I will henceforth call Kalimani Primary School, a pseudonym. The school operates from grade 1-8. At the end of eight years, all grade 8 candidates take a national examination called Kenya Primary National Examination (K.C.P.E). The language of instruction in this school from grade 1-8 was English, apart from Swahili classes where the language of instruction was Swahili. However, in practice the language of instruction in the first grade turned out to be both Swahili and English. This school was selected for this reason: it did not practice the national language policy which states that the language of the “catchment area” (i.e. local area) should be used as a language of instruction in grades 1-3. The language of the surrounding community where the children and their teachers came from was Kamba. Hence, according to the national language policy, the language of instruction in grades 1-3 should have been Kamba language. This was not the case and, in fact, Kamba was not to be spoken in the school compound.

Kalimani Primary School was begun in 1931 by the African Inland Mission missionaries who had planted a church in that location. As of this writing, the school is still sponsored by African Inland Church which provides spiritual nourishment to the school. It is important to note that in Kenya there is no separation of the state and the church. This is why Christian religious education was taught at Kalimani Primary School even though it was a public school. The Kenyan government provides free education, teachers, and very few textbooks to the school. Kalimani was both a day and a boarding school. The boarding wing was started in 1997 to make it possible for the students in grades 7 and 8 to spend more hours at school studying. The student

population was 802. Two hundred students were boarders and the rest were day scholars; at the time of the project, boarding began from grade four. There were 19 teachers (5 males and 14 females), 2 watchmen, 2 cooks, a patron, and a matron. The patron took care of the boys in the dormitories while the matron took care of the girls.

**The classroom.** In this first grade classroom there were eighty nine children whose age ranged from five to eight years. There were two female teachers in the classroom. The classroom was very crowded with desks and only one passageway for the teachers and students to walk back and forth. The main teaching aid in this classroom was the chalkboard. There was a great shortage of literacy and other educational materials. The children stayed in this classroom throughout the day; the teachers were the ones who moved in and out of the room.

**The community where the school was located.** Kalimani Primary School is located in one of the districts in Eastern Province of Kenya. This district borders Nairobi city to the west and Coast to the east (see the map below). The Kamba ethnic group occupies this district. This district was not an affluent community and people had different occupations for example, small scale farmers, motor bike operators, shop owners, manual workers in the farms, teachers etc. Some residents also worked in nearby cities, especially the capital city of Nairobi. Some of these residents commute daily to Nairobi while others come home at the end of the month to visit their families. According to the district's office, agriculture and livestock subsector was the largest employer and contributor to household incomes in the district. The sector was the largest employer and by extension the largest contributor to household incomes in the district. An estimated 30,125 people were engaged in crop farming in the district. The main crop in the district was corn which had been fluctuating over the years due to low unpredictable, erratic and inadequate rainfall. This had created food insecurity amongst the general population. However,

when I was completing this project there was a great harvest of corn. Access to water was a major problem owing to the fact that most rivers were seasonal and major water springs had not been fully exploited. The average walking distance to the nearest water point was 3 kilometers in the dry season. This reduced to 2 kilometers during the rainy season.

The 1999 census of the district stood at 190,969. Access to quality health care services in the district was poor. This was due to many factors including high levels of poverty, understaffing, long walking distances to nearest health facility and lack of supportive infrastructure at health care institutions. In terms of health care personnel for instance, there were only five doctors serving the whole district, which translated into a doctor/population ratio of 1:2,546. The average distance to the next health facility was 7 kilometers. By 1999, the district labor force (15-64 years) was 99,881 people which was 52.3% of the total population. There were many unemployed youths due to lack of opportunity and education in the district.

The district had 140 public primary schools with a total enrolment of 52,751. There was inadequate classroom space, desks and chairs, poor/low quality of classroom building and inadequate sanitation facilities. There were 40 public secondary schools in the district. Total enrolment at secondary school was estimated at 12,548. It had 190 early childhood development (ECD) centers.

Kalimani Primary School bordered a shopping center and African Inland Church. Next to the school there was a health center and a laboratory which was headed by a clinician. When the students fell sick they were taken to this health center by the matron. Next to the school there was a police post and District Officer's office. There were also several churches near the school. These were African Inland Church, Redeemed Gospel Church, Deliverance Church, Church Province of Kenya, Salvation Army, and Roman Catholic Church. The school children and their

teachers belonged to one of these churches. The children attended Sunday school every Sunday morning. At the Sunday schools the children usually used Kamba and a little bit of Swahili.

At homes and the market, usually people spoke Kamba and sometimes Swahili. I did not hear anyone speak English in the market or at the homes I visited. Along the road and homes, Kamba was the language of communication. At school the children were instructed to speak in either Swahili or English. However, on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010, Swahili was banned in grades 4-8. This language policy change will be discussed later. Kamba had already been banned at school.

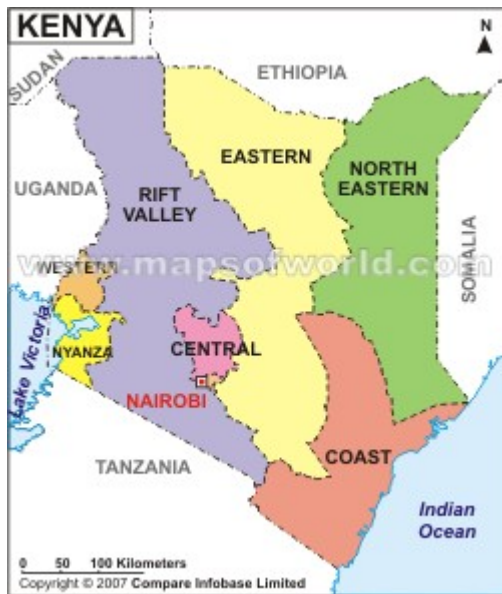


Fig. 3.1 A Map of Kenya Showing Provinces

### **Selection of Site and Children**

I looked for a school in a rural area which used English as the language of instruction right from grade one and which did not teach in the mother tongue or support its use in the school. This school met this requirement. I was introduced to this school by my sister who taught the special (mentally challenged) children. Therefore, she was my initial contact. She introduced me to the principal and the other teachers.

My first meeting with participants, both the children and their parents, was at the church. My sister introduced me in her church as well. I had the opportunity to talk with the parents and children who went to Kalimani Primary School. The children and their parents welcomed me in their community, school, and homes.

There were six focal children (four girls and two boys) in grade 1. I chose grade 1 because this is the grade in which the children are expected to read and write. I purposely chose the children who seemed to like writing and participated in the classroom and had friends in the classroom. These three criteria mattered because this study was on oral and written language from a sociocultural and dialogic perspective; it valued participant's participation and social interactions among people. Therefore, through such a participant I was able to see the participant in the company of other children and also participating in the classroom's practices.

Other participants included the English and Swahili teachers of grade 1, the parents of the six focal children and the school principal. The classroom teachers were key participants because they were the mediators of oral and written English and Swahili language learning in the classroom. Therefore, I worked very closely with the teachers. For instance, if something was not clear during my classroom observations, I sought the teachers' help. In addition, the parents played a great role in the success of their children's education. Hence, the parents gave me their perspectives on their children's learning and their perspectives on language policy of the school. The school principal was an administrator and she was responsible for the school's language policy and practices. Therefore, she was of great help in giving her perspectives especially on the issues of language policy in the school. I had consent from all the participants to carry out this study (see appendices F- I). Below is a brief description of focal children, their parents, teachers, and the principal. All the names used here are pseudonyms.



## **Focal Children and their Parents**

**Rafiki.** He was a six-year-old boy. He had a permanent smile. He was an only child. His mother worked in one of the coffee farms as an accountant. The father was a high school teacher in one of the local schools. He liked playing with his friends at the playground. He was friends with almost all the children in the classroom. He was always among the first children to complete the teacher's assigned work. At home he had a few textbooks through which he read and practiced writing in the evening and the weekends. He also had wall charts at home where he read different words and numbers.

**Tausi.** She was a seven-year-old girl. She was an only child. Her mother worked as a church secretary in one of the local churches. Her father was a high school principal in one of the private high schools in the region. Tausi liked singing and reciting poems. She had a couple of friends in the classroom. At home she had some textbooks to work from and sometimes she brought them to school. Also, she had wall charts to review different words and numbers. In addition, she had the following writing materials: pencils, exercise books, and chalk. The mother said Tausi was doing well at school because she was learning to read sentences on her own and her performance in classwork was good too.

**Chiriku.** She was a seven-year-old girl. She had two sisters. The parents were self-employed. They ran a shop at the shopping center. She had past exam papers and charts at home. The mother said she was idle at home because the children were not given any homework to do at home. Chiriku had a couple of friends in class.

**Kasuku.** She was a seven-year-old girl. She had a sister. She had some textbooks at home which parents used to help her to review. The parents were self-employed. They ran a convenient store in the shopping center. Kasuku had many friends in class.

**Fadhili.** He was a seven-year-old boy. He had a sister who came to the classroom during lunch time to see him. He always talked about what he did with the sister at home. The sister helped him with his homework. His mother was a single parent who worked at Nairobi city. He lived with his grandmother and his sister. He had many friends in the classroom. He liked singing. At home he had writing materials but no textbooks.

**Mhariri.** She was a seven-year old girl. She had a brother and a sister. The mother was a business lady who owned a clothing stall. The father was a teacher in one of the local primary schools. She had some textbooks, wall charts, and writing materials at home. The mother said she was doing very well in school because she was learning to read and write. She read these textbooks at home and her parents helped her read.

## **Teachers**

**Teacher training.** The two teachers (Mrs. Simba and Mrs. Swale) had gone through preservice professional teacher training in a teachers' college after receiving their high school diplomas. The preservice course in colleges took a period of 2 years. During this time the teacher trainees acquired skills and techniques of teaching various subjects and updated their academic knowledge in all the subjects taught in primary schools. Part of methods work was done during practical teaching, and both content and pedagogy (which included teaching practice) were covered during the course. A teacher trainee was required to study the following subjects: Professional Studies, Creative Arts (i.e. Arts and Craft, Music, and Physical Education), languages (i.e. English, Swahili, and Mother Tongue), Mathematics, Religion (i.e. Christianity, Islam, or Hindu), Science, and Social Education and Ethics. A teaching certificate was awarded which was based on continuous assessment grades, final examination grades and assessment in teaching practice.

**Mrs. Simba.** She was a 48-year-old female teacher. She had a daughter in college and two more children attended Kalimani primary school. Her husband was a primary school teacher in a neighboring school. She taught English, Social Education and Ethics (SEE), and Science. She came from the same community as her students. Mrs. Simba (just like many teachers and parents in the school) believed that the schoolchildren should be taught in English or Swahili but not Kamba because Kamba was not examined.

**Mrs. Swale.** She was a 47- year-old female teacher. She had a son who had completed a bachelor's degree in Kenya. She had a daughter who was attending school at Kalimani. On mornings before classes started and lunch time, the daughter came to the classroom to see her mother. She was a frequent visitor in the classroom but a very quiet girl. Her husband worked in the city of Nairobi. She taught Swahili, Christian Religious Education (CRE), and Math. She came from the same community as her students as well. Mrs. Swale wanted the children to learn Kamba, Swahili, and English. This is what she said after I asked her what she thought about speaking of Kamba among the Kamba children.

I want the children to know all the languages. It is important that we preserve our culture. My sister- in-law was employing house helps who had high school certificates so that they speak to her children in English only. If she found the house help speaking Kamba to her children, that house help was dismissed immediately. This was not a good practice of dismissing house helps because they spoke Kamba to her children. When she went for business trips outside town, and left the children with us we spoke to the children in Kamba throughout. Even when the children were with my children she spoke to her children in English only. You find that even when the child is breastfeeding; it is being spoken to in English. That is a movie! [Interview, July, 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010]

## **Principal**

**Mrs. Kisilu.** This was the school principal. She was in her fifties. She was also trained in a teachers' college just like Mrs. Simba and Mrs. Swale. She had been a deputy principal in this school and then promoted to principal position. She had children who had completed college.

She did not have any children in this school because they were all grown up. Her husband was a Pastor in one of the local churches. Apart from being an administrator she also taught English to grade 8 students and was a music teacher who took students to the national level contests. She had a tractor which supplied water to the school. She is the one who hired support staff. She invited me to her eighth grade class to talk about computers and show them computer parts (I used my laptop). She was very happy that I was at the school because she said I was a role model to the students that education does not end at the eighth grade.

### **Data Collection Design and Procedures**

The methods for gathering data were classroom participant observation, audio recording, interviewing, children's writings, and educational document collection. Below is a description of each method.

**Classroom observations.** I took scratch notes (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) during my classroom observations. Then, I typed them every day into Microsoft Word document and made necessary corrections from my fresh memory and audio records to form my field notes. I visited the classroom for two and half months every school day Monday to Friday from mid-May to end of July 2010 during all subjects' times. The subjects were Math, Swahili, English, Social Studies and Education (S.E.E), Christian Religious Education (CRE), and Science. Each subject's period was 60 minutes long. During the classroom observations, I participated most through listening and watching what was going on in the classroom. Through participant observation, I wanted to learn about students' participation, their experiences with oral and written language and also to learn how written and oral language was taught in that classroom. In addition, I paid close attention to what the teachers emphasized during language lessons (e.g., what is a good writing practice).

**Audio recordings.** Along with observations, I audio recorded all the classroom interactions throughout the day. I listened to the audio records as I transcribed the field notes to refresh my memory. Any time I was in class my audio recorder was on.

**Children's written work.** I collected children's written work and took digital pictures, recorded their talk as they wrote to complement my observations, and talked with the children concerning their written products. I audio recorded all the stories they told me concerning their writings, and I transcribed them on a daily basis.

**Local documents.** I also borrowed teachers' lesson plans, schemes of work, and texts to inform me about the official curriculum (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). I copied the lesson plans and schemes of work and purchased my own copies of the teachers' guides and classroom textbooks. In addition, I looked at classroom tests to see what students were tested on.

**National documents.** Moreover, I looked at different national educational documents. I looked at the Kenya National Syllabus, National language policy and curriculum documents, that is, Ominde Report, Gachathi Report, Koech Report, Kamunge Report, and Mackay Report, and Ministry of Education's schemes of work. I looked at the National syllabus and the National language policy and curriculum documents and Ministry of Education's schemes of work before I went to the site, while in the field, and after. I wanted to have an idea of what was expected of the students and the teachers by the government. I looked at each document especially to see what it stated about the language policy of schools in rural areas and urban areas as well. I also looked at what they stated concerning teaching practices in the classroom and anything else which was of importance to this study. Furthermore, I paid close attention to the English subject's syllabus to see what it stated about the content, classroom interaction, and any other detail which seemed relevant to this study.

**Interviews.** Moreover, I carried out formal interviews once with each participant during the month of June and July 2010 with the teachers, students, parents, and the principal. I interviewed the two grade one teachers, the school principal, a group of the six focal children, and 5 parents of the focal children. I had a group interview of the six focal children but throughout the observation period I talked with different children concerning their learning. The interviews were between one half to two hours long. I had about 16 hours of formal interviews. In the course of my observations, I had informal interviews with the participants as well. I audio recorded all of the formal interviews. The interviews were done in English and Swahili depending on which language the participant was comfortable with. I usually began the interviews in English and if the participant responded in Swahili then I switched to Swahili. These interviews were close, personal interactions conducted to explore students' writing, their classroom participation, and experiences in their classrooms or out of class (at home) with oral and written language. The teachers were interviewed on the classroom practices in general and language policy. The parents were interviewed to get their perspectives on the school's language policy and practices, especially the banning of Kamba and punishing the children who spoke it at school, the English only policy at the school, and their children's literacy experiences both at home and at school. The principal was interviewed on the school's language policy, shortage of classrooms and literacy materials, history of the school, and many issues on administration. The formal interview questions were written down (see appendices A-E) and were used as a guide. In these interviews, I listened more than I talked, but I remained ready to give a navigational nudge when it was necessary.

The teachers, the principal, and the children were interviewed at school while the parents were interviewed at the market or at their church compound.

I hoped that by triangulating data sources I would give a clear picture of what it meant to learn oral and written language in this class and among the Kenyan rural children in general.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

I started conducting my data analysis during the data-collection period, after the first few observations. This enabled me to observe emerging themes from the very beginning, and helped me re-examine specific issues. For example, I found some practices in the English classroom were very common during my observations. These included copying off the board and choral and repetitive reading. I revisited these issues during my informal and formal interviews with the teachers to find out why it was important to have these particular practices in the classroom.

To enable me to analyze the data and address the research questions that I had raised, I followed the following procedure. First, the interviews' audio records and children's talk audio records were transcribed, using the field notes to contextualize the transcriptions. Second, I organized the field notes/transcriptions and written work by literacy event (i.e. an activity involving reading and writing). The events themselves were also organized into recurrent events or practices in teaching, reading, writing, and speech. Although I had originally intended to examine only the English teaching and learning practices, I extended the study to include the Swahili classroom practices. I did so because that classroom revealed different dynamics, including dialogues and storytelling; these practices, undergirded by different language ideologies, suggested possibilities even in the crowded conditions of the classroom. Third, the documents were further organized into national (i.e. English language national syllabus, Ministry of Education's schemes of work and national language policy documents) and local (i.e. the teachers' schemes of work and lesson plans, class text, and the teachers' guide books).

Once I sorted out the data this way, I proceeded to further analyze the data inductively (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995), identifying themes or categories (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). For the data organized by classroom practices I began open coding by reading data line by line, writing words and phrases in the margins next to the pertinent data that identified and named analytic categories; the categories were about the nature of recurrent pedagogical activities and about the underlying language ideologies (i.e., values and beliefs about language). Next, I did focused coding where I looked for particular salient categories and wrote initial memos (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Also, I referred back to the research questions I had raised and my theoretical framework as a guide to constructing thematic categories. Based on the research questions and the data available, I made some assertions.

The data from the documents were analyzed by relying on the research questions about language policies at varied institutional levels. The research questions helped me in developing categories for these data as well.

For the children's written work, each focal child's work was analyzed separately and then the writings were grouped into categories that reflected the children's use of writing relative to drawing; pictures only, pictures with labels, pictures with related written down stories, and pictures accompanied by peer talk.

In the following table I summarize my data collection and analysis procedures with reference to my research questions.



Table 3.1 *Data Collection and Analysis Summary*

Research Question	Subsets of Questions	Sources of Data	Data Analysis
1. How is Kenyan national language policy enacted in the classroom?	1a) What languages are used in this classroom? 1b) How do different languages, both written and spoken, intersect in the classroom? i) What is the role of English? ii) What is the role of Swahili? iii) What is the role of the mother tongue?	Observations, interviews, national documents	Inductively from open coding, focused coding, hence thematic categories. (This applied in all questions below.)
2. How is the official language curriculum expressed in the classroom?	2a) In what ways is spoken and written English and Swahili taught and learned? i) What pedagogical approaches do the teachers use in the classroom, in responding to students? ii) What instructional materials are available to the students? 2b) How is written and spoken language assessed in the classroom? i) Who is a good or a bad writer according to the teachers and peers? ii) Who is a good or a bad speaker according to the teachers and peers?	Observations, interviews, local documents	

(continued)

Table 3.1 (continued)

Research Question	Subsets of Questions	Sources of Data	Data Analysis
3. How do children participate in the official speaking and writing activities	3a) How are different media used in this classroom? i) What is the role of drawing? ii) What is the role of peer talk? iii) What is the role of Kenyan's cultural resources of songs/riddles/proverbs? iv) What is the role of storytelling? v) What is the role of play? 3b) What is the nature of teacher-child relationship during speaking and writing activities?	Observations, interviews, children's writing, curriculum documents	
4. What are teachers', parents', administrator's, and children's guiding ideologies about language?	4a) What are the learners' perceptions towards English language instructions, both oral and written? 4b) What are the learners' perceptions towards mother tongue and Swahili? 4c) What are the teachers' perceptions towards learning and teaching of English? 4d) What are the teachers' perceptions towards mother tongue and Swahili? 4e) What are parents' perceptions towards English, mother tongue, and Swahili? 4f) What are the administrator's perceptions towards English, mother tongue, and Swahili?	Observations and interviews	

(continued)

Table 3.1 (continued)

Research Question	Subsets of Questions	Sources of Data	Data Analysis
5. What are the influences of Kenyan's language policy and practices (i.e. using English only as a medium of instruction from grade 4 upwards and punishment in home language use) in 2- 4 above?		Responses to the questions 1-4 above	

Finally, through my data collection and initial data analysis, I did “member check” with the teachers, by sharing with them my interpretations, to make sure that there were no discrepancies with the data they had provided and their intended meanings.

### **Researcher's Role: Who was I in my Research?**

**Locating myself in the study.** Who am I (Dyson & Genishi, 2005)? This was an important question for me in this study. Given that I am a Kenyan, I shared a cultural identity with my participants. Given that I share an identity with my participants, this was a great advantage to me in this study. The teachers, the children, and the parents viewed me as one of them and they were ready to provide any information wherever I inquired. However, I considered myself as both an insider and outsider. I was an insider in various cultural practices including the school's and the community's practices. For instance, I am an English second language learner, I attended a rural school, and some of my former classmates were punished for using their local language- Kamba at school. However, I was an outsider in this particular site because I did not know its daily practices and this was where my participants played the greatest

role of giving their own meanings of what it meant to learn oral and written language in their own classroom and school in general.

Given this scenario, I volunteered to help in other positions other than classroom teaching. And, in fact, during my first encounter with the school principal, she requested that I take the children outside for Physical Education. She informed me that the children would love me for that act of participation. I did take this responsibility gladly. It turned out the children loved to be taken outside and for sure, “They loved me for this.” I also accompanied the teacher on duty to take first, second, and third graders for devotion every Thursday at the church. I attended every Monday and Friday morning assemblies and all the teachers’ meetings. Also, I ate lunch with the teachers and drank 11:00 o’clock tea with the teachers at their staffroom/lounge. I ate and drank tea with them because I wanted to seize the opportunity to hear their views on the many practices I observed in the school, for example, the banning of Kamba at school and the English only policy. Furthermore, the teachers always wanted to hear my voice on many issues, and this helped me to enter into their dialogues and conversations as well. I tried to fit in.

Even though I took some of these “teacher’s responsibilities” I made it clear to the children that I was not a teacher and I was interested in knowing how they learn. Also, I told them to call me “Esther,” a name they were amazed to call me. They always smiled when they called my name out loud. However, the teachers always called me “mwalimu” (teacher). They looked at me as one of them and they were ready to provide any kind of information I requested. These children did not view me as a teacher but just “Esther”. I saw myself as a friend to them and they were ready to talk to me any time. Furthermore, when, I walked in the community during my weekend strolls, they always came running to greet me and escort me. It was a position I enjoyed. In fact, I joked with the teachers that I had a great army (the children) in the

community that nobody would dare harm me! With this role, the children were always willing to talk to me and show me any drawings or writings they did when they were alone during breaks or even at home.

I also attended church services where four of the focal children and their parents were members. This gave me an opportunity to talk with the children and interact with them outside the school. It also gave me an opportunity to talk with their parents. In addition, I attended a political campaign rally and visited the market many times to hear what languages people spoke in and the kind of dialogues they had among themselves.

### **Timeline**

Table 3.2 below shows the timeline of this study from data collection to defense.

Table 3.2 *Timeline of the Study*

Time Period	Activity
January - Mid May 2010	Document Collection and Analysis: Kenya National Syllabus, Ministry of Education's schemes of work, Ominde Report, Gachathi Report, Koech Report, Kamunge Report, Mackay Report, etc.
Mid May- July 2010	Data Collection: observations, writing of field notes, audio recording, collection of children's writings, teachers' lesson plans and schemes of work, educational documents, transcribing, and member checking
August- December 2010	Preliminary Data Analysis
January- April 2011	Dissertation Write- up and Defense

## **Chapter 4**

### **Educational Documents in Kenya**

I aim to situate this study, which is an ethnographic case study, in the Kenyan national education system. In this chapter I will, therefore, look at educational documents because they inform me of my case (i.e. the first grade classroom) and phenomenon (i.e. language learning). A case cannot be studied without considering its context or surrounding. “We look for the detail of interaction with its contexts” (Stake, 1995, p. xi). What surrounds my case includes educational documents in the country. In this regard, I examined what the documents stated in terms of language policy in education, classroom practices especially interactions, and how oral and written language should be learned. I reviewed some of the key educational documents since Kenyan independence because I recognized that what was happening in the language classroom that I studied was not only influenced by the current documents but also by the past ones. Also, current educational documents are a result of the past documents. As a matter of fact, the present documents in education were born after reviewing the previous documents. The current ones either reinforced the previous documents or addressed their shortcomings.

In trying to understand the case and the phenomenon, I read many Kenyan educational documents; and, therefore, in order for me to sort out the key educational documents, I was guided by my research questions and theoretical framework. Therefore, I will examine the key educational documents which address national language policy in primary schools (i.e. Ominde Commission Report (Republic of Kenya, 1964), Gachathi Report (Republic of Kenya, 1976), Koech Report (Republic of Kenya, 1999), and English National Syllabus [Kenya Institute of Education, 2006]), curriculum and literacy development (i.e. English National Syllabus and Schemes of Work [Ministry of Education, 2009]), and classroom practices in Kenya (i.e.

Kamunge Report (Republic of Kenya, 1988), Unified Primary School Syllabus (Ministry of Education, 1967), and Mackay Report [Republic of Kenya, 1981]). In essence, I want to show what the language policy is for primary schools, that is, what is the role of English, mother tongue, and Swahili languages in primary education? And, what language classroom practices are backed by these documents? In addition, I show that some of these documents which operate or operated at the same historical periods seem to have contradictions and disconnections in terms of classroom practices (e.g. in terms of the teacher's role and students' role in language learning). Also, there seems to be ambivalence about the role of the mother tongue and provisions for its use in the classroom. Therefore, this confusing situation continues and the teachers and schools, responding to their reading of the goal of language education ("success" on examinations and economic market) foreground English at the expense of the other languages, especially mother tongues. In the sections to come, I will first look at the language policy documents, followed by curriculum documents, and finally examine documents that address classroom interactions.

### **The National Language Policy in Primary Schools**

Throughout the 1950s (colonial era), learners in Kenyan primary schools were taught in their various mother tongues (L1) (i.e. Kenyan local languages, Asian (Indian origin) languages or English language) in grades 1-4; during these grades English was taught as a subject for two or three years in African and Asian schools, and thereafter it became a language of instruction from grade 5-8 (Sifuna, 1980). By the middle of the 1950s, there was growing discontent about the poor performance of African and Asian children in Kenya's national examinations which were written in English as compared to the European counterparts who took the same Kenyan examinations (Sifuna, 1980). The poor performance was blamed on the use of L1 as language of

instruction for the African and Asian children (Muthwii, 2002). Therefore, in 1961 there was an implementation of English as a language of instruction from grade 1 in Asian schools which spread very fast to all primary schools in Kenya (Mbaabu, 1996).

Since independence in 1963, language policy in the Kenyan education system has been reviewed several times. Therefore, in the following section, I will review and analyze recommendations of three important education commissions' reports on language policy in primary schools in Kenya. It is important to note that these commissions went around speaking to Kenyan people to gather their views concerning language in education. Hence, the views in these language documents are the views of the majority of the Kenyan population at that historical time. Following the recommendations of the commissions, the government endorsed the recommendations immediately to be in use in all Kenyan schools. These are the Ominde Commission (1964), the Gachathi Report (1976), and the Koech Report (1999). It is important to note that, these (past and current) documents' influences are in the Kenyan education system to this day. For, example, even though the Ominde Report's language policy operated officially up to 1976 and then there was Gachathi Report, the Ominde's ideas are very alive at Kalimani primary school (i.e. the site of the current study) in terms of English use. English is the medium of instruction right from grade one at Kalimani primary school even though all the children in grade one speak Kamba.

**Education Commissions' Reports.** There are three major education commissions' reports in Kenya since independence. These are the Ominde Commission (1964), the Gachathi Report (1976), and the Koech Report (1999).

***The Ominde Commission (1964).*** This was the first education commission in independent Kenya. This commission was appointed by the Kenyan government under the



leadership of Prof. S. M. Ominde to look at the existing educational resources of Kenya and to advise the government on the formulation and implementation of national policies for education. These recommendations served to launch guidelines for the language policy of the newly independent Kenyan nation. This commission recommended that the medium of instruction right from grade one should be English for the following reasons:

First, the English medium makes possible a systematic development of language study and literacy which would be very difficult to achieve in the mother tongues. Secondly, as the result of the systematic development possible in the English medium, a quicker progress is possible in all subjects. Thirdly, the foundation laid in the first three years is more scientifically conceived, and therefore provides a more solid basis for all subsequent studies, than was ever possible in the old vernacular teaching. Fourthly, the difficult transition from a vernacular to an English medium which can take up much time in standard (grade) five, is avoided. Fifthly, the resulting linguistic equipment is expected to be more satisfactory, an advantage that cannot fail to expedite and improve the quality of post-primary education of all kind. (Republic of Kenya, 1964, p. 60)

So, the language view of this first education commission in independent Kenya is that the language of education should be English and not mother tongue. Muthwii (2004) states,

At independence when the government took over the mandate to provide education, the strong rationalization that all learners needed to learn in English to produce a skilled labor force to run government and industry was already in place. The Ominde Commission of 1964 strengthened this position and instituted English as the language of instruction in all schools from class one. (p. 36)

Therefore, even before the Ominde Commission was in place, there was a strong belief among Kenyans that English was the language to enable them to produce skilled manpower in government and commerce; the Ominde Commission just reinforced and instituted this common belief. To crown it all, English was the language of power in colonized Kenya, power that Kenyans felt had been denied to them by their British colonial masters.

In the 1950s, Kenyans were denied the learning of English by the colonial power because they did not want Kenyans to hold positions of power in government and industry (Bunyi, 1999; Mbaabu, 1996; Muthwii, 2004). Even though some Kenyans had developed mother tongue

literacy, this did not help them in securing jobs in the colonialized Kenya. What they could do best was to read the Holy Bible to themselves and to their folks in their mother tongue, that is, the mother tongues which had orthographies (Bunyi, 1999). Hence, every parent in independent Kenya wanted their children to have this power which came through English literacy.

Also, this Commission was pushed towards English because there were very few literacy materials in mother tongues and to make it worse some mother tongues have no orthographies to this day (Jones, 2008). In addition, there were no materials (even to this day) written in mother tongues for the content subjects like math, science, and social studies. All content textbooks are written in English. Moreover, there were no (up to today) examinations written in mother tongues. All content examinations are written in English.

Thus, looking at the above commission's reasons, it appears that with English as the medium of instruction which had literacy materials and also was the language of examinations, the schools in independent Kenya would have no problems. Also, this commission was of the idea that there would be an organized way of learning language and literacy if done in English rather than in mother tongue. I attribute this idea to the fact that English had orthography and literacy materials as compared to mother tongues. It is a big challenge to learn a language which does not have orthography and obviously it would not have literacy materials. In addition, the commission held the idea that, given that there would be some organized way of learning language and literacy, then there would be faster progress in all content subjects. Moreover, the commission considered that the first three years in education were fundamental for future education. Hence, with English as the medium of instruction in these early years of education, future development in education was assured unlike if the initial learning was done in mother tongue. This reasoning is based on the fourth and fifth reasons given by the commission. That is,

the transition from one language to another is avoided (i.e. from mother tongue to English) and that the resulting product (i.e. the learner) is more satisfying, that is, the learner can execute in post-primary education (i.e. in high school and colleges).

These were ideas and beliefs held by the Commission and Kenyan people at that particular historical time. And, up to this day, the majority of the participants I interacted with in the field held the same belief and ideas that English is the way forward in education. It holds the power in education and job market.

However, from a sociocultural and dialogic perspective, the five reasons given by the commission for English medium instruction in Kenya are problematic. First, it is possible to learn any language (this includes mother tongues) with proper support, for example, with meaningful social interactions, literacy materials, and learner's participation. Moreover, a dialogic view challenges this monologic voice which is perpetuated by the English only policy. Such a view supports the idea of diverse voices in the society (Bakhtin, 1981) hence in the education system.

The commission stated the following about mother tongues:

The vernacular languages are essential languages of verbal communication and we recognize no difficulty in including a daily period for story-telling in the vernacular, or similar activities in the curriculum of Standard I, II, and III. We apprehend, therefore, that the vernaculars will continue to serve their historic role of providing a means of domestic verbal communication..... We see no case for assigning to them a role which they are ill-adapted, namely, the role of the educational media in the critical early years of schooling. (p. 60)

From the above quote, it seems that the commission did not give mother tongues any literacy consideration like reading and writing. The vernaculars were to remain in their historical oral forms. Also, the commission did not see a reason for the Kenyan local languages to be given the role of medium of instruction at all because they were not prepared for this role.

As already stated, there were no written materials for content areas and also not all mother tongues had or have orthographies and hence, it was not surprising for the commission to state that the mother tongues were not prepared to play the role of language of instruction in primary schools. However, as already stated any language is capable of being a medium of instruction with proper support.

Finally, the commission stated the following about Swahili:

Those giving evidence were virtually unanimous in recommending a general spread of this language, not only to provide an additional and specifically African vehicle for national coordination and unification, but also with eastern parts of the Congo (Zaire) and parts of Central Africa. Kiswahili is, therefore, recognized both as a unifying national language and a means of Pan-African communication over a considerable part of the continent. In view of these important functions, we believe that Kiswahili should be a compulsory subject in primary school. (p. 60-61)

The commission felt that Swahili deserved to be a compulsory subject in primary schools because of its role as a unifying language in the country and as a regional lingua franca. However, the commission did not state clearly when Swahili should start to be taught in primary schools, is it right from grade one or after? The commission did not give Swahili a role as a medium of instruction even though, even then, Swahili had significant body of literature and was spoken by a vast population of Kenyans (Bunyi, 1999; Mbaabu, 1996).

Thus, the Ominde Commission's Report supported English as the medium of instruction from grade one, Swahili to be one of the compulsory subjects, and mother tongues to be given a daily lesson for storytelling. Hence, I find this document to be relevant to what was happening at Kalimani primary school. At Kalimani the language of instruction (i.e from grade 1-8) was English, Swahili was one of the compulsory subjects, and mother tongue was not given any role even an oral one (e.g. storytelling). Therefore, this document informs my case and problem

in that the historical context affects the case at its present state. English up to this day in Kenya carries its historical power as it were in Kenyan society and Kenyan schools.

***The Gachathi Report (1976).*** This was the second education commission after independence. The government set up this commission under the leadership of Mr. P. J. Gachathi. This commission was to evaluate the education system, to define a new set of educational goals for the second decade of independence and to formulate a specific program of action for achieving those goals. This report was published in 1976. This commission realized that most of the children in the rural areas can only speak their mother tongues at the time of enrolling in primary education. Yet they were expected from the Ominde Commission's perspective to have learned adequate English by the end of primary school years to be able to do the Kenya National Examination in English. The commission had the following recommendations about English, Swahili, and other indigenous languages, "to use as a language of instruction the predominant language spoken in the schools' catchment area for the first three years of primary education" (Republic of Kenya, 1976, p. 54). In this recommendation, the language of the catchment (locality) in rural areas is one of the many indigenous languages spoken in Kenya which was given a very marginal role in the Ominde's commission. In most urban centers and settlement areas Swahili is the dominant language. Also, in cosmopolitan urban areas such as Nairobi City, English may be the language of the catchment. Thus, in Kenya, English, Swahili or an indigenous language (e.g. Kamba) may be used as the medium of instruction in primary school grades 1-3. It is important to note that this document saw the importance of taking the multilingual reality of Kenya into consideration in setting the language policy in Kenyan schools. However, its recommendation of initial literacy to be done in mother tongue was a challenge in itself. This was because of the lack of literacy materials and

content subjects' written materials in mother tongues. In this regard, the Gachathi report recommended that Kenya Institute of Education should prepare materials in the form of graded sets of readers for each mother tongue, for teaching of those languages, as well as for the teaching of other subjects in mother tongues. This progress has been very slow. As of now, only 22 indigenous languages out of 42 have orthographies (Jones, 2008). Thus, it is a challenge to develop readers in those indigenous languages which do not have orthographies. Moreover, in Kenya all textbooks for all subjects apart from Swahili and mother tongue (e.g. Kamba) were written in English and so were the exams.

In addition, the commission had the following recommendation about English, “to introduce English as a subject from Primary 1 and to make it supersede the predominant local language as the medium of instruction in Primary 4” (p. 54). This recommendation states that English is to be introduced as a subject in grade 1, and that in grade 4, it should take over from the language of the catchment area as the medium of instruction. Therefore, all over the country from grade 4 English was to be the medium of instruction. So historically, this document increases the role of mother tongues in education. From the standpoint of contemporary research and sociocultural perspectives, this document would be found wanting and an instance of “subtractive bilingualism” (Baker, 2000, p. 58) where one language is being discouraged in support of another, hence, killing of diverse voices represented by the Kenyan society. In addition, this recommendation was contrary to the national goals of education which have been in effect since independence. For example, the fourth goal states that, education in Kenya should “promote cultural values” (Republic of Kenya, 1976, p. 12). Kenyan indigenous languages are part of these cultural values. So, if these indigenous languages were not used from grade 4 to 8 then this means Kenyans were not promoting this national treasure.

Next, the commission had the following to say about Swahili:

To introduce Kiswahili as a compulsory subject in Primary 3 (or when English medium instruction begins) to take over from the vernacular-medium instruction to avoid making pupils of primary school age learn two new languages at the same time.

To teach Kiswahili as a compulsory subject and to include it in the Certificate of Primary Education examination or its successor. (p. 57)

The commission recommended that Swahili should be introduced as a compulsory subject in primary grade 3, or when English started being used as the medium of instruction. This commission also recommended that Swahili should not only be taught as a compulsory subject in primary schools, but that it should also be a subject of examination at the end of primary school cycle. Although this recommendation was made in 1976, it was not implemented until 1985 along with the newly restructured 8-4-4 system of education. Also, from a dialogic view, this Commission seems to privilege the voice of English over that of Swahili. Swahili was not to be introduced right from first grade like English for the reason that it will be detrimental to the students to face two new languages at the time. Why was English not introduced later after Swahili? Perhaps, as Hudelson (2005) notes, English is such a dominant language (i.e. voice) globally, education systems feel obligated to use and to teach it in schools to be at par with the rest of the world.

It is important to note that this report has had great impact on the other education reports which came after it. I now turn to Koech report which exemplifies what I have stated.

***The Koech Report (1999).*** This is the latest education commission report in Kenya which was led by Mr. D. Koech. This commission reinforced the Gachathi Report (1976) by acknowledging that:

to enhance concept formation and articulation in linguistic communication children should continue to be taught in their mother tongue or the dominant language of the school environment until the end of lower primary (primary 3). During this period,

English and Kiswahili, the official and national languages respectively, should be taught vigorously as subjects. In upper primary (primary 4-8), when the child has already “mastered” English and Kiswahili, English should then be introduced as the medium of instruction. (Republic of Kenya, 1999, p. 284)

From a dialogic and sociocultural view, I agree with the commission’s realization of the importance of mother tongues in children’s concept formation and articulation in linguistic communication. To give mother tongues a role in primary schools is important to allow home-school continuation. However, from dialogic view, this commission is just like its predecessors; it privileged the English voice because English takes over as the language of instruction from grade 4. No more voice of mother tongues from grade 4. Hence, the already mentioned subtractive bilingualism.

Moreover, just like the Gachathi Report, this commission had the following recommendation concerning mother tongue literacy materials: “The Ministry responsible for education works out modalities for ensuring publication of instructional materials in all the local languages in the country” (p. 284). As I have already mentioned, only 22 local languages have orthographies and all textbooks are in English. Therefore, availability of instructional materials in indigenous languages is a major challenge in the instruction of indigenous languages.

Looking at the three commissions’ recommendations, it is noticeable that English has continued to play a major role in Kenya’s education system. It is the language of instruction from grade four nationally. Also, in some urban settings, it is the medium of instruction right from grade one. Swahili and other indigenous languages have continued to play a bridging role between home and school. Swahili continues to be one of the compulsory and examinable subjects in primary schools. Other mother tongues do not appear anywhere after grade 3 and in some rural areas like Kalimani Primary School where this study was done, mother tongue, that



is Kamba, even though it has an orthography, it does not appear right from grade one. Hence, subtractive bilingualism is a common phenomenon in Kenyan schools. In fact, the Kenya Institute of Education (2006) in the current and operating English National Syllabus states,

English is learned throughout the Primary School. In standard one to three, it is taught as a subject, while mother tongue is used as the medium of instruction. In standard four to eight it is taught as a subject and used as the medium of instruction in other subjects. (p. 2)

Therefore, English voice thrives right from grade 1 to the end of the primary cycle. It is the authoritative voice (discourse) (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). Bakhtin (1981) addressing authoritative discourse states that,

The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it. The authoritative word is located in a distance zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. (p. 342)

Bakhtin in the above quotation gives a vivid picture of English language in Kenya. The English language demands that Kenyans acknowledge it in schools and other spheres in the society, to make it their own! It has its colonial and economic power fused in it, organically connected to Kenya's past of colonialism which is hierarchically higher. Therefore, English is "the language" (Thiong'o, 1986, p. 11) in Kenya. Hence, this is the kind of language ideology Kenyan schools/classrooms operate in. The ideology that English is superior compared to the local Kenyan languages. This ideology is based on its power in the education system and job market. As a result of this ideology, English language flourishes as the privileged voice in every Kenyan classroom. After looking at the language policy since independence, I now turn to the documents which address curriculum to see how language and literacy ought to be taught and learned as stipulated in these documents.

## **Kenya's Primary Curriculum and Literacy Development**

The national primary school curriculum is uniform throughout the country. Subject experts nationally develop it at the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE). This curriculum is then arranged in various syllabi at different levels. Syllabus development involves participation by the KIE's steering committee, individual subject panels for the various cycles and areas of education and training, and the Academic Board. The participants in these panels and the Board are drawn from relevant subject teachers and specialists from schools, colleges and universities, subject inspectors, representatives from Kenya National Examinations Council, curriculum specialists from KIE, and interested parties from Government and Non-Government Organizations (Ministry of Education, 1994). However, from a dialogic view, this preparation of syllabus leaves out two very important voices in children's learning, that is, the students' and parents'.

In this section, I will examine grade 1 English national syllabus (2006) and schemes of work from the Ministry of Education (2009) to analyze how English is learned and taught (or should be learned and taught) from these official documents. "Schemes of work" is a plan of work from the syllabus showing what is to be covered within a specified period of time. These two documents are a product of Gachathi's and Koech's Reports. I have already shown that the English national syllabus (2006), just like the Gachathi Report and the Koech Report, restates that on the one hand, English is taught as a subject in grade one to three and it is the language of instruction in grade four to eight. On the other hand, the mother tongue is the medium of instruction in grade one to three. Mother tongue instruction ceases at the end of third grade. It is important to note that the syllabus of any subject contains the amount of work to be learned and taught and objectives to be realized. Schemes of work are drawn up to show the breakdown of the syllabus, that is, time allocations, lessons, topics, objectives, teaching/learning activities, and

teaching/learning resources. The Ministry of Education prepares certain schemes of work centrally, but schools are under no obligation to use these schemes provided they have a suitable alternative, nor is there any objection to these schemes being modified (Ministry of Education, 1967). Kalimani Primary School teachers prepared their own schemes of work which were more or less a duplicate of the Ministry of Education's schemes of work. In this section I will look at the schemes of work from the Ministry of Education which is a national document. The teacher's schemes of work will be discussed in chapter six. I now turn to English syllabus followed by the schemes of work.

**English National Syllabus.** The English Syllabus adopts a thematic approach in teaching various language skills. "The themes are derived from things and situations that learners are likely to interact with in everyday life" (Kenya Institute of Education, 2006, p. 3). The following themes or topics are to be covered in grade 1 English subject for the whole year according to the current English syllabus (2006): greetings and requests, home, classroom, numbers, family, our body, days of the week and the weather, school, time, months of the year, clothes, farm animals and tools in the home, travel, shopping, wild animals, and occupation. These themes from a dialogic and sociocultural view seem to encourage different practices and voices in the classroom if appropriated in meaningful classroom social interactions which are mediated by the teacher and collaborative peers. In fact, the English syllabus states the following concerning meaningful teaching and learning:

The pupils' ability to speak fluently depends on how exposed they are to the language. Constructive classroom talk, therefore, should be encouraged. Learners should be given ample opportunities to talk about themselves, express their ideas and opinions, tell stories, discuss events and describe experiences. (Kenya Institute of Education, 2006, p. 2)

Therefore, meaningful learning is important according to this document. The English syllabus, still addressing meaningful learning in terms of collaborative learning, states, “Collaborative learning provides the pupils with opportunities for classroom talk. The pupils work in pairs and in groups to share learning experiences” (p. 2). Collaborative peers (Dyson, 2003, 1997, 1989; Vygotsky, 1978) are important in language learning. But as I shall discuss in chapter six, this was not the case in the English classroom. There was no group work where the children could talk freely with each other on different aspects of their lives. Next, I will look at what the schemes of work state concerning the activities to be covered under some of the themes in the syllabus.

**Ministry of Education’s English Schemes of Work.** I will provide a description and analysis of oral, reading, writing, and handwriting activities in English subject. I will do this to show on the practices reinforced by these schemes of work.

***English oral language learning.*** The following table 4.1 gives a summary of some of the themes and students’ activities covered under oral language section. The topics are listed in the order they were to be taught.

*Table 4.1 Oral Language*

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Activities for the students</u>
Letters of the alphabet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Listen to the teacher and observe the learning aids.</li> <li>-Recite or sing the letters of the alphabet after the teacher.</li> </ul>
Greetings and requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Practice exchanging greetings with the teacher, in pairs, and in groups.</li> <li>- Answer questions from the teacher appropriately.</li> <li>- Practice saying new words in pairs as they dramatize.</li> </ul>
Our classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Listen to the teacher and observe the teaching aids.</li> <li>-Repeat the teacher's sentences.</li> <li>-Name objects in the classroom.</li> <li>-Respond to simple classroom instructions.</li> </ul>
Our home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Listen to the teacher and observe the teaching aids.</li> <li>-Repeat sentences using various objects or pictures.</li> <li>-Name the objects found in their home.</li> <li>-Use the plural forms correctly.</li> </ul>
Our family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Talk about their families.</li> <li>- Constructing sentences.</li> </ul>
Parts of the body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Repeat sentences after the teacher while touching different body parts.</li> <li>-Sing the song on parts of body.</li> <li>-Naming parts of the body.</li> </ul>
Months of the year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Listen and repeat sentences after the teacher</li> <li>-Construct their sentences on months of the year.</li> <li>-Saying months of the year.</li> <li>-Acquire vocabulary relating to the months of the year.</li> <li>-Use simple future tense correctly.</li> <li>-Use simple past tense correctly.</li> </ul>

(continued)

Table 4.1 (continued)

Clothes (A pair of)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Observe the objects and repeat the questions and answers after the teacher.</li> <li>-Practice new sentence patterns.</li> <li>-Acquire vocabulary of items relating to clothes and use them appropriately.</li> </ul>
Different clothes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Observe and repeat sentences after the teacher.</li> <li>-Construct their own sentences.</li> <li>-Naming different clothes.</li> </ul>
Traveling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Listen and repeat after the teacher.</li> <li>-Respond to the questions in complete sentences.</li> <li>-Sing the train song.</li> <li>- Naming means of traveling.</li> </ul>

Looking at the above table, for students to learn oral English language, it appears that they should listen to the teacher, repeat words or sentences after the teacher, answer questions from the teacher, name different objects, observe different objects, make their own sentences, and recite or sing. In addition, these activities are teacher- centered. The teacher seems to play a very active role in this kind of learning. Working in pairs or in groups seems to be a rare thing in this curriculum which is opposite to collaborative learning which is emphasized by the English National Syllabus as we have seen and also sociocultural and dialogic learning practices. Also, in this kind of learning, it seems rote learning or memorizing by repeating what the teacher has said takes a center stage. From sociocultural and dialogic perspectives, languages are not learned through imitation of other speakers, but through meaningful interactions and dialogues. Therefore, in this important educational document in Kenya, the children seem to have been given a very passive role in their learning.

**English reading development.** The next table 4.2 gives a summary of the themes and students' activities under the reading section. Just like in the oral section, the topics are listed in the order they were to be taught.

*Table 4.2 Reading Development*

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Activities for the students</u>
Letters of the alphabet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Recite the letters of the alphabet.</li> <li>-Carry out letter recognition.</li> <li>-Read the letters of the alphabet.</li> </ul>
Greetings and requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Revise vocabulary on greetings by responding to the teacher's questions.</li> <li>- Repeat the teacher's sentences.</li> <li>-Read greetings and requests.</li> <li>- Make sentence patterns and use them in greetings and requests.</li> <li>-Participate in the classroom discussions.</li> <li>-Read the text in pairs.</li> </ul>
Our classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Answer teacher's questions.</li> <li>-Read words on the flashcards.</li> <li>-Answer the oral questions.</li> <li>- Read names of different objects in the classrooms.</li> </ul>
Our home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Answer teacher's questions.</li> <li>-Read words on the flashcards.</li> <li>-Answer the oral questions.</li> <li>- Read names of different objects in the classrooms.</li> </ul>
Our family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Read words on the flashcards and the sentences as guided by the teacher.</li> <li>- Read the names of family members.</li> <li>-Read sentences about family aloud.</li> <li>-Reading words, sentences, and text.</li> </ul>
Clothes (A pair of)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Participate in the discussion.</li> <li>-Read the text.</li> <li>-Read sentences involving pairs.</li> </ul>
Different clothes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Listen and repeat after the teacher.</li> <li>-Read the text aloud.</li> </ul>

(continued)

Table 4.2 (continued)

Traveling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Participate in the discussion and word recognition activities.</li> <li>-Read aloud the text.</li> <li>- Read sentences on traveling.</li> </ul>
At the market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Read the story “at the market”.</li> <li>-Answer oral questions.</li> </ul>

From the above table, reading is realized through the following activities: reciting the letters of the alphabet, recognizing and reading letters of the alphabet, words, sentences and text, listening and repeating sentences or words after the teacher, constructing sentences, and participating in the classroom discussion. It appears just like in the oral learning, memorizing through reciting, listening, answering questions from the teacher or repeating what the teacher says seems to take a center stage in the reading curriculum. Also, from this curriculum it appears to assume that reading develops in a linear order; first, there is reading of the letters of the alphabet, followed by words, then sentences, and text/story. However, from a developmental view consistent with a sociocultural perspective (Dyson, 2003; Miller & Goodnow, 1995; Samway, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978) development does not have to be uniform or linear. Children participate in meaningful practices, accumulating and stretching resources across practices, which themselves vary creatively and socioculturally. Different learners take different routes in their learning (Clay, 1998).

***English writing development.*** Writing involves the following students’ activities which are summarized in the following table 4.3. I only included five themes because these activities were repeated in several themes.



*Table 4.3 Writing Development*

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Activities</u>
Letters of the alphabet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recite the letters of the alphabet.</li> <li>- Write the letters of the alphabet.</li> <li>-Draw patterns on the letters of the alphabet.</li> </ul>
Greetings and Requests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Write the correct greetings and response in the blank spaces.</li> <li>-Participate in the discussions.</li> <li>- Work out exercises in their books.</li> </ul>
Our classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Construct sentences using real object pictures.</li> <li>-Participate in discussions.</li> <li>-Work on the exercise.</li> </ul>
Our home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Revise vocabulary learnt earlier.</li> <li>-Discuss class work.</li> <li>-Work on the exercise.</li> <li>- Matching pictures with word.</li> </ul>
Clothes (A pair of)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Revise the new vocabulary.</li> <li>-Participate in the discussions.</li> <li>-Fill in the blanks with the correct words involving clothes.</li> <li>-Draw and color the pictures.</li> </ul>

Looking at the activities in the above table, it appears that in order for the students to learn English written language they have to recite letters of the alphabet, write down the letters of the alphabet, draw patterns on the letters of the alphabet, draw and color the letters of the alphabet, fill in blank spaces, answer teacher's questions, participate in the classroom discussions, construct sentences, do exercises, and match pictures with words. It is clear that the students are actively doing different activities. There is recitation, coloring, drawing, making sentences, matching exercises, discussions, and answering of questions. However, in this curriculum, writing is reduced to filling the blanks, writing down the letters of the alphabet or words or sentences; there is no creation of children's texts.

**English handwriting.** Under every theme, there were different handwriting activities to be done. These activities are as shown in the following table 4.4.

*Table 4.4 Handwriting Development*

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Students' activities</u>
Handwriting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Revise different letters of the alphabet</li> <li>-Imitate formation of the letters from the teacher</li> <li>-Watch and imitate the teacher's movements</li> <li>-Draw different objects depending on the letter (e.g. an apple for letter A, an orange for letter O, and a cat for letter C)</li> <li>- Copy and draw patterns in their exercise books</li> <li>-Copy the letters and words in their exercise books</li> <li>-Write letters on the chalkboard</li> </ul>

It emerges from the schemes of work that the students have to engage in the following activities to develop handwriting skills: revise the letters of the alphabet, watch and imitate formation of the letters from the teacher, draw objects, copy patterns in their exercise books from their textbooks or chalkboard, copy letters and words in their exercise books, write down letters on chalkboard, and copy patterns in their exercise books. As with oral, reading, and writing curricula, imitation and copying are key activities in this curriculum. The stakeholders in these education documents, “indeed, they are recycling the view of children as empty vessels to be filled by behaviorist-oriented, scripted lessons” (Genishi & Dyson, 2009, p. 10). Behaviorists (e.g. Skinner, 1957) view language as behavior and believe that language learning is simply a matter of imitation and habit formation (Hoff, 2005). From “a behavioristic account of language development, children imitate what they hear, and they are reinforced when they get it right and are corrected- or at least not reinforced- when they get it wrong” (Hoff, 2005, p. 231). Therefore,

imitation and practice are preliminary; discrimination and generalization are key to language development in this approach. This imitation may be word for word repetition of all or part of an utterance as in this document. However, children do not imitate adults' like parrots. This reveals behavioristic approaches inadequacy in teaching children language. It is a big concern because these behavioristic ideas to language learning are the contexts in which most Kenyan classrooms operate as per this document. In fact, this is what I observed in Kalimani's English language classroom. The students, most of the day, received instructions from the teacher, imitated what the teacher said or read, copied what the teacher wrote on the chalkboard, and their language behavior was reinforced or corrected in different ways as it will be discussed in chapter six.

With this introduction of behavioristic ideas of language learning and teaching, I now turn to a discussion of teacher-child interaction as shown by the following educational documents: Kamunge Report (Republic of Kenya, 1988), Ominde Report (Republic of Kenya, 1964), The Unified Primary School Syllabus (Republic of Kenya, 1967), and Mackay Report (Republic of Kenya, 1981).

### **Classroom Practices: Teacher-Child Interactions**

Many educational reports, especially, the Kamunge Education Report (1988) and the Ominde Report (1964), have reported that the curriculum for primary education level should place more emphasis on child-centered approaches in teaching to enhance both quality and motivation. The Ominde Report (1964) states:

Nobody who is familiar with the primary school, will be unaware of the occurrence of drill methods of teaching; of an authoritarian tone of voice on the part of the teacher; of a neglect of activity methods and pupil participation; of little attempt at grouping, or otherwise adjusting instruction to the needs of particular children; of a negative approach to discipline; and of a formalized presentation of material. (Republic of Kenya, 1964, p. 62)

The Ominde Report states that the teaching approach in 1964 and before was marked by drilling method, extreme authority of the teacher, and formalized instruction. Moreover, many years after Ominde Report's statement, the Ministry of Education (2006) states, "Currently, transmissional forms of teaching in which pupils are passive and expected to recall when required to, dominate teaching in primary schools. This approach needs to be changed through regular curriculum review" (p.13). Although the Ministry of Education observes that students are learning through memorizing and recalling, it is an ironic statement given what we have seen from the schemes of work that are developed by the Ministry of Education itself. There is a great emphasis on memorizing and recalling of information. This is done through imitating the teacher, that is, repeating what the teacher says or reads, copying from the textbooks or chalkboard, answering questions from the teacher, filling the blanks etc. Also, the Ministry of Education in the above quote suggests that the transmissional teaching approach needs to be changed through regular curriculum review; however, the Kenyan curriculum has been reviewed at least three times since independence but, the same type of teaching practice, that of rote learning in the classrooms, as we shall see in chapter six seems to persist.

In the next subsection, I will discuss the three major curricula reforms in Kenya, that is, New Primary Approach, Unified Primary School Curriculum, and 8-4-4 Curriculum. In discussing these reforms which were or are formulated by the Ministry of Education and other government agencies, I want to examine the kind of teaching approaches for which they advocate. This kind of foundation will be a backbone to my discussion of classroom practices in the coming chapters. These three major curricula just like language policies were born as a result of education commissions' reports to the government. Also, they operated under different language policies as it will be discussed in this section.

**New Primary Approach (NPA).** Immediately after independence in 1963, there was what was called the New Primary Approach (NPA) (Ministry of Education, 1973). NPA was started in 1957 in Asian schools and with the demolition of segregated schools, it was adopted in all primary schools in Kenya. The aim of this approach was to enable the students to:

develop in the educational process through active and full participation instead of the old concept where the child passively receives instructions from the teacher. Thus in the New Primary Approach Method the teacher becomes less of a dictator and more of a guide. (Ministry of Education, 1973, p.18)

So, NPA discouraged the teaching approaches which made students learn passively; teachers were to be mediators but not dictators. In other words, it was an approach which emphasized active participation of students in their own learning. This approach was in line with the Ominde Report (1964) which supported meaningful learning as I have already discussed. It is also in line with sociocultural views (Dyson, 1993; Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasize social interactions and mediation by experts like teachers in learning processes. Moreover, it is in line with dialogic views (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986) which stress the value of voices in dialogic interactions. However, what we have seen in the current schemes of work is the emphasis of teaching where a child receives instructions from the teacher throughout the day.

Consequently, Eshiwani (1993) a researcher and one of the great educators in Kenya and a former Chancellor of Kenyatta University in Kenya, reports that with time the NPA started to decline. Eshiwani gives the following reasons for its decline which were cited by its evaluators:

- a) A large number of untrained teachers were assigned to teach NPA classes with no adequate preparation and supervision;
- b) The resources for effective implementation of the NPA were below the required standard;
- c) There seemed to be no concrete policy on how to finance the NPA program. (p. 163)

Based on the above problems, it is a fact that for any curriculum, teachers need to be trained, resources have to be there (e.g. textbooks, buildings, rooms, desks, writing materials etc.), and definitely there must be sound logistics for its funding. Therefore, it is not surprising that the NPA curriculum failed because it did not have the proper support.

Another major reason which is given for the failure of NPA is its emphasis on English as the medium of instruction from grade 1 (Eshiwani, 1993) especially for the children whose L1 was not English and therefore lacked English support at home. It is important to note that NPA's support of English as a language of instruction was in line with the language policy of the time, that is, the Ominde Report, which supported English as a medium of instruction through the primary grades. Eshiwani, discussing NPA, states that no attention was paid to first languages; UNESCO's linguistic policy that children's education should begin in their native tongues was completely ignored. "It is no wonder that .... the NPA started to decline tremendously" (p. 162). Therefore, still with other problems associated with NPA, failure to consider children's first language played a great role in its failure. Looking at the reasons associated with NPA failure, first, it informs my case and phenomenon that a child's first language is crucial to the learning of a second language. Secondly, availability of learning materials, buildings, and trained teachers are important for language learning. Thus, as I will discuss in chapters six and seven, which focus on English and Swahili language learning that are second languages to Kalimani children, I am informed that first language, literacy materials, and good infrastructures are mandatory for any meaningful second language learning to take place. These resources were scarce and first language was not acknowledged in the first grade classroom which I studied (especially during English lessons) and this brought great challenges in learning of English as a second language.

**The Unified Primary School Curriculum.** This is a historical syllabus. It was the first syllabus for the unracialized education in Kenya. During the colonial era each race (i.e. Africans, Europeans, Arabs, and Asians) had their own education system. The Ministry of Education published this historical syllabus in 1967. It is out of this syllabus that we have the rest of the syllabuses over the years; including the already discussed English syllabus (2006). It gave the foundation and way forward in education in the new nation, Kenya. As the Chief Education Officer, J. H. Gitau stated in the foreword of the syllabus, “This syllabus replaces the former African Primary and Intermediate Syllabus printed in 1962, and also all the former European, Arab and Asian Primary School Syllabuses. Thus, from 1967 on, this will be the only syllabus for all Kenya Primary Schools.” During the colonial period, there were different syllabuses along racial lines. There were syllabuses for the European education system, Asian and Arab education system, and African education system. Therefore, the unified syllabus was a major step in the education system in Kenya.

Moreover, there was another major curriculum change in the Unified Primary School Syllabus: two syllabuses for English subject, one for English speakers’ classes and one for non-English speakers in grades 1-3. The English speakers’ classes were classes where the teachers and students shared English as their L1. Non-English speakers’ classes were classes where both the teacher and the students, English was their second language. Currently, there is only one English language syllabus for all public schools in Kenya. Another important element of this curriculum was its emphasis on students’ creativity and practical work in learning, and the importance it paid to the role of the L1 even though the medium of instruction was English in the country (Republic of Kenya, 1964). The syllabus stated that the classes where the teacher and the

students shared L1 which was not English were to do part of their learning each day in their L1.

It gave the following two aims for mother tongue periods (sessions):

- a) to provide opportunities for the child to express himself and his reactions to the classroom situation in a language in which he feels at home;
- b) to enable him to learn to read and write in his own language. (Ministry of Education, 1967, p. 15)

This syllabus contradicted the national policy in education as stipulated in Ominde Report (Republic of Kenya, 1964) that English was to be a language of instruction right from grade one. There seems to be a disconnect between these two important documents in the country which were in operation then.

As I have mentioned, this curriculum emphasized creativity and practical work. For example it states during mother tongue period, “In Primary I the child should be encouraged to talk about his school experiences, including the new environment of the classroom, his activities in other periods, “news” of events he knows about, and his relationships with teachers and other pupils” (p. 15). This curriculum acknowledged the importance of a child having a voice (Bakhtin, 1981; 1986) in his or her learning. The emphasis of child’s talk (Dyson, 1989; 1993, 2003) is paramount in any learning and this is what this curriculum stood for.

In addition, this curriculum emphasized the importance of child’s play in group work. It stated, “Reading in groups will develop into play-reading” (p. 17). Play promotes language learning (Dyson, 1989, 1993, 1997, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). From a sociocultural view, play is a child’s work; it is the natural thing that children do. Therefore, encouraging group work, which leads to role-play, is important in a child’s learning. Child’s social agency is exercised through play and group work. From sociocultural and dialogic views, I argue that it is important to have a child-centered pedagogy in Kenya.



However, this approach failed as NPA in Kenya as well. Two reasons have been cited for its failure. There was an emphasis on national examinations and poor quality of teachers (Eshiwani, 1993). For example, mother tongues are not examined in the national examinations (Mbaabu, 1996). Moreover, mother tongues are only supposed to be taught in grades 1-3. Therefore, they are neglected and their time used for other examinable subjects like English and Math. This is what I observed at Kalimani Primary School. Time allocated for Kamba (mother tongue) in the class schedule was used in teaching the examinable subjects. The examinations also emphasize factual knowledge (as it will be seen in chapter six). Hence, no application of creative and practical knowledge is represented in these examinations. One primary school principal stated, “If the 1967 syllabus had been fully implemented then the primary school curriculum in Kenya would have adequately met the cultural and economic needs of the school leavers” (Eshiwani, 1993, p. 165). Thus, if mother tongues had been taught adequately and supported in schools this would make students have pride in their own languages and cultures. In addition, teachers have to be trained and continue getting refresher training before any progress can be made in any curriculum. Also, another problem which may have caused the failure of this curriculum is the shortage of literacy materials in mother tongues which persists to this day. To learn in mother tongues, these materials have to be available, and as I have mentioned materials in mother tongues are in short supply in Kenya and so are other literacy materials. So once more, another curriculum failed to be fully implemented in Kenya.

Therefore, this curriculum approach just like the previous one informs me that first languages and training of teachers are important in learning of second languages. Teachers need to be at par with current teaching methods of second languages, especially those methods which emphasize that language learning should be student-centered (Saville-Troike (1984). Preservice

training is not enough, refresher courses are crucial for language teaching. Also, the reasons for its failure inform my study that emphasis on examinations can be detrimental to language learning, especially to unexaminable languages like mother tongues. This therefore, explains that due to the fact that Kamba language was not examined by the end of the primary cycle, then this was the reason why it was ignored at Kalimani primary school. Also, I am informed that the quality of a teacher can affect language teaching. This was true between the English teacher and the Swahili teacher as it will be discussed in chapters 6 and 7.

**8-4-4 Curriculum.** In 1981, there was a major curriculum change which also changed the Kenyan education system from 7-4-2-3 to 8-4-4. 8-4-4 system of education is the current education system in Kenya. On one hand, under 7-4-2-3 system of education, there were seven years in primary school, four years in ordinary high school, two years in advanced high school, and three years in the university. On the other hand, under 8-4-4 system of education, there are eight years of primary education, four years of secondary education, and four years of basic university education. 8-4-4 system of education is a brainchild of the Presidential working party on the second university or as it is well known in Kenya, The Mackay Report (1981). In 8-4-4, the curriculum content was geared more towards practical and technical education. The approach was to lay emphasis on the exploitation of local resources and facilities and concentrate on utilizing the experience of the learner in the classroom. Unlike the previous system which was marked by rote learning and memorization (Republic of Kenya, 1988), it was expected to move away from examination-centered education and that the teachers would adopt a more practical, child-centered approach (Republic of Kenya, 1992). Although 8-4-4 ideas were very promising in Kenya, just like NPA and Unified Primary School Curriculum, some problems have been reported which usually occur during implementation stage (Republic of Kenya, 1992). These are:

- a) Unsatisfactory interpretation of curriculum to suit local conditions
- b) Inadequate inservice courses
- c) Lack of creativity in determining the entry behavior of teacher trainees
- d) Overemphasis of examination results in society
- e) Inadequate orientation to the use of teaching guidelines by teachers
- f) Failure to adapt curriculum to unique conditions and situations
- g) Omission of instruction in reading and writing in the curriculum. (P.43-44)

The above problems can be grouped into two major problems, that is, inadequate preparation of teachers (i.e. problem a, b, c, e, f, and g) and emphasis on examinations in the country (i.e. problem d). Therefore, there is need for appropriate teacher training and de-emphasizing of examinations. In addition, as I have mentioned, I observed that inadequacy of resources as a major problem in implementing the 8-4-4 system of education especially the shortage of textbooks in all subjects in the rural areas and also buildings for learning in. This was the case at Kalimani primary school. There was a big shortage of learning materials and buildings which resulted in overcrowding in all the classes. Therefore, the 8-4-4 curriculum just like its predecessors informs my study that training of teachers, availability of learning materials, and child-centered teaching are important for meaningful language learning.

### Summary and Conclusion

The following table 4.5 summarizes the documents' ideas discussed in this chapter.

*Table 4.5 Summary of Documents' Perspectives on Language Policy and Classroom Practices*

Document	Language Policy	Curriculum/Classroom practices
Ominde Report (1964)	English, medium of instruction in grades 1-8; Swahili, compulsory (not clear from which grade); mother tongues, for oral purposes in grade 1.	NPA: Activity methods and active pupil participation, group work

(continued)

Table 4.5 (continued)

Unified Primary Syllabus (1967)	Both English and mother tongue, media of instruction in grades 1-3; 4-8 English as medium of instruction, Swahili compulsory	Unified Primary Curriculum (UPC): Play, students' creativity/participation and practical work in learning; teacher is a guide not a dictator
Gachathi Report (1976)	Mother tongue, medium of instruction in grades 1-3; English, medium of instruction grades 4-8; Swahili compulsory in grades 3-8	UPC: Active pupil participation
Mackay Report (1981)	Mother tongue, medium of instruction grades 1-3; English, medium of instruction grades 4-8; Swahili compulsory and examinable grades 1-8	8-4-4 curriculum: Practical child-centered approach, utilize learners' experiences; move away from exam-centered education
Kamunge Report (1988)	Mother tongue, medium of instruction grades 1-3; English, medium of instruction grades 4-8; Swahili compulsory and examinable in grades 1-8	8-4-4 curriculum: Practical child-centered approach, utilize learners' experiences; move away from exam-centered education
Koech Report (1999)	Mother tongue, medium of instruction grades 1-3; English, medium of instruction grades 4-8; Swahili compulsory and examinable in grades 1-8	8-4-4 curriculum: Practical child-centered approach, utilize learners' experiences; move away from exam-centered education
English National Syllabus (2006)	Mother tongue, medium of instruction grades 1-3; English, medium of instruction grade 4-8	8-4-4 curriculum: Practical child-centered approach, utilize learners' experiences; move away from exam-centered education
English, Ministry of Education's Schemes of Work (2009)	(operates under the current English syllabus)	(Operates officially under 8-4-4 curriculum but in practice is not): emphasizes rote learning, a passive student with a dominating teacher

First and foremost, these documents inform my study. They inform me that in the Kenyan classrooms, I expect either child-centered teaching approaches like in all the documents

discussed apart from the schemes of work, or I expect a teacher dominated classroom with a passive child as per the schemes of work's guidelines. Second, there is a contradiction between different documents operating in the country at the same time, for example, schemes of work and the English syllabus and Koech Report which are operating at the same historical period. Also, there was a disconnect between the Ominde Report of 1964 which was in operation in the country until 1976 and Unified Primary Syllabus of 1967 in terms of Mother tongue and English language policy. Hence, this may be the reason why the teachers and schools follow one document which suits them at the expense of the other. Thus, it is no wonder in the English classroom, which will be discussed in chapter six, that the teacher's pedagogical approaches resembled those of the schemes of work and not the syllabus' guidelines of having meaningful learning in the classroom. As I will discuss in chapter six, this classroom's learning was based on rote learning and memorization. Also, another important aspect concerning these documents is that there is no way they could consider every classroom context in the country. Each classroom has its peculiar contexts although there are those which are general and the documents seemed to have considered the general context (e.g. the linguistic context). Therefore, the context of the studied classroom seemed to have contributed a lot to what was happening in the classroom as I will discuss. In the next chapter, I discuss these contexts.

## Chapter 5

### Contexts in and Surrounding Kalimani Primary School

From a sociocultural and dialogic view learning is inseparable from its context, including both the school's language policy context that was enacted in the classroom and the physical context in which the interactional one evolved. Thus, the school's policy and physical contexts played a major role in what sort of social interactions took place. In sum, the broader historical, institutional, physical, and social processes shaped the kinds of practices and interactions which occurred in the classroom. Hence, I will begin by describing and analyzing the school's language policy and practices, followed by the physical context of the classroom.

There were three major languages represented in this school. There was Kamba, which was the mother tongue of the majority of the children. There was Swahili, the national language and one of the official languages, which was spoken by nearly all the children, and English, the other official language which was spoken by the children in grades 4-8. In this section, I will examine Kalimani's language policy and the practices which came up as a result of the school's language policy. I will begin by looking at the school's language policy which will be followed by the two major practices in the school/classroom: punishment for speaking mother tongue and translation.

#### **Kalimani School's Language Policy**

In the unwritten policy of the school, English was the medium of instruction right from grade one. This is exemplified by the English teacher, Mrs. Simba who said, "You know I'm supposed to teach in English, English *pekee*, *lakini hawawezi wakaelewa* [only, but they cannot understand] especially in class one." Although the language policy states that English must be the language of instruction, practically this was not possible because the children were still

learning English and the teachers settled for Swahili to ensure communication between them and the children was accomplished. Her fellow grade one teacher, Mrs. Swale put it the way I observed it in that classroom, “We use mostly Swahili and a bit of English. Swahili *ndio* [is the] language of instruction, *ndio tunatumia sana lakini tukija wakati wa mtihani* [it is the language we usually use but when it comes to exams], all the exams are written in English *isipokuwa Kiswahili* [except Swahili]. So, sometimes we translate for them so that they may understand.” Therefore for communication purposes, the teachers translated from English to Swahili. Also, because exams are written in English, they had to bring in a little “bit of English.” Mrs. Swale mentions the translating practice; this practice will be discussed later in this section.

Prior to July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010, English and Swahili were the media of communication from grade 1-8. However, in the morning of July, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010 this rule changed and Swahili was no longer a language of communication from grade 4-8. It remained a language of communication only in grades 1-3. Swahili is one of the examinable languages in this school and in the whole country. This change in the language policy will be discussed below. Kamba or any other mother tongue had no role in this school. However, it is important to note that Kamba was once a subject in this school. Kamba was offered in this school in grades 1-3 before 2000. From 2000 on, there was no Kamba language in the school. Although Kamba was taught as a subject then, the children even then were not allowed to speak it beyond its allocated time in the classroom. Any child who spoke Kamba was punished just as it is up to this day in this school. This punishing practice will be discussed later as well. I was informed by the teachers and the school principal that the offering of Kamba as a subject was stopped when the school became a mixed day and boarding school in 2000. With the boarding wing, the school admitted children from far and near who were both Kamba speakers and non-Kamba speakers. Kalimani performed well in the Kenya

Certificate of National Examination at the end of primary cycle and this success factor attracted many students to the school.

**Changes in language policy.** Kalimani primary school had changed its language policy a few times as I was informed by the teachers. I consider that any school's language policy must involve all the stakeholders. For instance, before any principal makes any changes in the language policy of the school, the parents, teachers, and students if possible must be involved in such decisions. However, this was not the case at Kalimani primary school. Language policy was the business of the school principal. For example, in the morning of July, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010 the principal single handedly made the announcement that Swahili would be treated as a mother tongue in the school, and any child who spoke it from grade four to eight would be punished. Prior to this announcement, I had asked her in an interview the following:

Esther (E): So, who determines the language policy of this school? Is it you, the PTA (Parent Teachers Association), the government or the sponsor of the school?

Principal (P): No, it is not the government, it is not the PTA; it is the teachers. It depends on the headmaster [principal] of that school.

E: Mm.

P: Because it is not every school that uses English and Swahili as media of communication, you go in other schools and you find there is a lot of Kamba even in the classroom when the teacher is teaching. You find a teacher, teaching in Kamba. And to make the matters worse, you find the headmaster is one of those teachers. So, how will he encourage the staff to use English or Swahili? You find teachers giving instruction to pupils in Kamba. So, it depends on the headmaster and staff. And something like that, the headmaster should be an example because we cannot say, "Let us have English and Swahili as the media of instruction," and you yourself you communicate in Kamba. (Interview, June, 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

From the above dialogue the principal made it clear that in her school, it was the principal (herself) who determined what the language policy of the school would be. Although she had stated in her beginning statement that it was the teachers and the principal who determined the language policy, she clarified by saying that it was the principal who determined the language policy of the school. She also criticized the principals who taught in Kamba. The principal's



criticism is unjustified because when I asked her why in 2000 her school changed the language policy and banned the teaching and use of Kamba in the school, she stated the main reason was because of the children who could not speak Kamba since were from outside the Kamba community. This is illustrated below by my conversation with her:

E: I have realized that there is no Kamba teaching in this school or even use of Kamba as a medium of instruction. Why is this the case?

P: We used to teach but now we are having so many non-Kamba students and whenever they come they are housed at the shopping center and this is the only nearest school. They bring their children here. Some are Luos, others are Kalenjins, others Kikuyus, so when the teacher will be in class teaching Kamba, what shall we do to these non-Kamba students?

E: They will be left out.

P: They will be left out. You give them an exam, they get zero. And you find that, it will never help them. This Kamba will never help the non-Kamba students. It is not a language they will use in future; they cannot use it at their homes. So we found there was no need. Again, those are so many languages: Kamba, Swahili and English. There was a lot of confusion. You find especially when the Swahili came in, you know that Swahili came in later. When Swahili came in, pupils were confusing it with Kamba; because most of the words are very close in Kamba. For instance, “kikapu” [Swahili word for basket] and “kikavu” [Kamba word for basket]. You see?

E: Mm.

P: So, you find in the exam, pupils are mixing Swahili and Kamba languages. But, the major reason we don’t teach it here, it is to ensure interaction with non-Kamba students, so that we may meet every pupil in terms of communication.

E: When did you stop teaching Kamba?

P: That was around 2000.

E: Does Kamba have any role in the school?

P: No.

E: No?

P: No. It doesn’t have. (Interview, June, 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

In the above dialogue, the principal mentioned that the main reason for banning Kamba in the school was because of the multilingual nature of the school since 2000. Therefore, as I have stated there was no reason to criticize the schools and teachers who used Kamba in their schools because they did not have non-Kamba students in their schools. I had an opportunity to talk with people in the community and some teachers from the nearby schools and they confirmed that they did not have students outside their community. So, on the grounds that these

nearby schools did not have students from outside the community: they were justified in their use of Kamba in their schools. As a matter of fact, as I have discussed in chapter four, they were following the national language policy which states that schools in homogenous communities should use mother tongue as a language of instruction in grades 1-3. Also, the principal mentioned that another reason why they stopped teaching Kamba was because these were many languages to be taught to the children, and they were confusing them and mixing them in the exams, especially Kamba and Swahili. This, however, is part of the process of learning a second language. This is the “interlanguage stage” which most second language learners go through (Gass & Selinker, 2001, p. 17). Interlanguage is a language which has the features of the first language and the second language. This stage is overcome with time because any language learning is a process. The learner gets to know the second language better.

In addition in the above conversation, the principal generalizes that all children were confusing the two languages; however, this was not true of all students. In fact, some children came to grade one speaking both Swahili and Kamba and of course knowing the difference between the two languages. The principal seemed to be justifying her language policy of banning Kamba language in the school. By the end of the day, I assumed she banned Kamba language in the school because it was a non-examinable subject. If it was examinable it could still be taught. She categorically stated that this language, spoken by most of the children in this school, did not have any role in the school. In fact, when a child spoke it and it was reported to the teacher, that child was punished. I will look at this punishing practice in the next section. But before this, as I have already stated while I was in this school I saw the language policy take another turn. Kamba was not the only language that school’s policy banned as a language of communication but also Swahili.

Swahili was banned as a language of communication from grade 4-8 although it remained a subject in the school because it was examinable. Also, Swahili remained the language of communication in grades 1-3. According to the principal this change was because the students were speaking and writing “Sheng” in the examinations. Sheng is a slang of the urbanized youths; its structure is Swahili but it mixes English and other Kenyan languages. The principal had copied this policy from another school in the district which was performing better than her school; she believed this was because that school banned use of Swahili outside the Swahili lessons. That school had an English only policy.

The whole Kalimani staff had actually visited that school to see how they did things differently from them. The visit was done while I was at Kalimani doing this project. There was a staff meeting to analyze their visit and the “English only” policy seemed to have pleased the principal, although the teachers said that most students appeared dull, and also the teachers at that school mentioned those who could not speak English remained silent all day long! What a punishment on Kenyan children, who are not even allowed to speak their national language - Swahili, let alone their mother tongues. Little did I know that the Kalimani principal was going to copy this policy! The visited school also stated the reason for banning Swahili speaking in their school was because of Sheng as well. However, when I interacted with the students and heard them speak Swahili, there was no Sheng in Kalimani primary school. The students could sometimes use English words in their Swahili speaking but that was not Sheng. It was just borrowing words from another language, which is a practice in any multilingual society like Kenya.

The banning of Swahili was not taken lightly by the Swahili teachers, and one of the teachers asked the principal how the children were to perfect their Swahili when they could not

practice it at school. The principal repeated the same Sheng argument, that if the students were allowed to speak Swahili then they would speak Sheng and end up writing Sheng in their Swahili compositions. This was protection of the “Standard Swahili” in a very interesting way. In my view, this was a very unconvincing argument from the principal. Other Swahili teachers did not agree with the banning of Swahili in the school as well and in fact Mrs. Swale, the first grade Swahili teacher, told me the following:

Mrs. Swale (Mrs. S): You know as a Swahili teacher *siwezi nikakubali waongee Kiingereza tu* [I cannot agree they speak only English] throughout because *Kiswahili kitaenda chini* [Swahili’s performance will go down]. *Kwa hivyo* [Therefore], I don’t support, although they say it, but, when you don’t support it, just keep quiet. If you can’t beat them just take a silent stand.

Esther & Mrs. S: (Laugh).

Mrs. S: *Kwa hivyo kama ni sasa kwangu naweza kuuliza* [I would ask for] Swahili in some days and English in other days. *Lakini si* [But not] English throughout. *Unakuta sasa watakapoanza kuandika ndio wataandika ile Sheng* [You find that when they begin writing, that is the time they will write that Sheng]. You know *ni vizuri mtoto kuongea, aongee vibaya umfanyie* [it’s good a child speaks broken language and you give her/him] corrections. *Lakini akingojea wakati wa kuandika insha ndio sasa anaanza kufikiria Kiswahili hiyo ni shida. Lakini English haina hiyo shida kubwa, kwa vile English haiwezi kuingiliana na sheng. Lakini Kiswahili ni upesi mtoto kuingiza sheng aone kama ni lugha, Lakini si lugha sanifu* [But if she/he waits until the time for writing composition, that is the time she/he begins thinking in Swahili that is a challenge. But, English does not have that big challenge because English does not mix with Sheng. But it is very easy for a child to mix Swahili and Sheng and think it is standard language, but is not a standard language]. (Interview, July, 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

Although this Swahili teacher did not oppose the banning of Swahili openly she opposed it silently and there were other teachers like her as well. Mrs. Swale believed for the children to improve in Swahili language skills and even not to use Sheng in their writings, they needed to speak Swahili and in the process of interacting with the teachers they will be helped in eliminating Sheng in their writing and speaking. In fact, Mrs. Swale was not sure if the English only policy would survive for long because she told me the following, “There is a time we started it here, some years back but it never worked. So we had to take some days in for Swahili,

so two days for Swahili and three days for English” (Interview, July, 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010). From Mrs. Swale’s words, it is clear that this school is used to trial- and- error kind of language policy and in the process the children were suffering by being denied the opportunity to speak Swahili and other mother tongues in the school.

Although most of the Swahili teachers opposed the banning of Swahili as a language of communication in the school, some teachers took the principal’s banning of Swahili speaking positively and were ready to put it into practice even though they were not consulted in this decision. See the following vignette on one teacher on duty and the principal:

This morning the teacher on duty announced that from standard 1-3 the language of communication is Swahili. There is no speaking of Kamba at all in the school compound. She commented that there was a lot of speaking of Kamba in class one that morning. She also added that the language of communication from grade four to eight was English. Swahili was henceforth to be treated like a mother tongue. When the principal stood to give out announcements she also added that Swahili was a mother tongue from grade 4-8. She commented that since the policy of English only from class 4-8, class 5 had immediately adhered to that policy and she rewarded them with candy. [July, 12<sup>th</sup>, 201]

Therefore, the principal’s banning of Swahili was followed directly by some teachers like the one above, without any evidence of having considered repercussions on the children’s lives. She said Swahili was a mother tongue just like her principal did. Swahili was not a mother tongue to most of these children. The mother tongue for the majority of them was Kamba. In addition, when the principal stood up, she congratulated grade 5 students and rewarded them for speaking English only in the school compound. It was interesting how she established that this class was speaking English only throughout the school compound.

Three days after the announcement of this new policy, I passed by the grade six classroom where the students had been punished by their class teacher for speaking Swahili. The following vignette elaborates my point:

Today on my way to the staffroom from grade one classroom, I found the entire class of grade six kneeling down outside their classroom. I asked them in Swahili, “*Mmefanya nini* (what have you done)?” And some said, “We spoke in Swahili which is a mother tongue.” Usually in the past when I spoke to the children in Swahili they replied in Swahili as well. But, I’m surprised they replied in English. These children knelt down for 30 minutes on bare concrete. (Field notes, July, 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

Hence, this school’s language policy was immediately implemented by the grade six class teacher. The children not only suffered psychological torture of being denied to speak in Swahili, but also suffered physically and it was also humiliating before the whole school.

Before I conclude my discussion on the change of language policy at Kalimani primary school, I would like the reader to see the following comment about the role of Swahili in the school from the principal. I had asked her what the role of Swahili in the school was. I had this conversation with her on June, 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010 almost one month before she changed the language policy:

Still Kiswahili is good uh... now what do I say is the role of Kiswahili in school? —It is the subject like the rest, it has to be tested. And, on the other side, it is the national language. So, if the child does not know how to communicate in English, he will opt for Swahili. So, it will help the child to be able to communicate. Especially now when we have so many non-Kamba students here, at least if a child cannot communicate in English he is able to communicate in Swahili and they will understand one another.

When the principal made the declaration that Swahili was no longer a language of communication in the school from grade 4-8, the above comment about Swahili’s role kept on ringing on my mind and I wondered why she forgot and overlooked the role of Swahili so fast in the school. Swahili was the language which held all the children together in this school. The non-Kamba speakers and Kamba speakers were thought to be brought together as Kenyan children by the speaking of Swahili. But now the only language which they could communicate in was English and, as a fact, some children, as the principal stated, could not communicate in English, and therefore they used Swahili because Kamba was not allowed in the school. With the banning

of Swahili from grade 4-8, this meant that there would be no more communication between such children, and others would just opt to be silent. I asserted as already stated that the principal just copied this school policy from another school without consulting with the teachers. I now turn to punishing practice in this school because of speaking Kamba. I will look at what the teachers, students, and parents thought about it.

**Punishment for speaking mother tongue.** It was repeated many times by different people: teachers, parents, and children that the language of examinations and textbooks was English apart from the Swahili subject. Therefore, it was stated by most people that the banning of Kamba and the punishing of the culprits were fine. Mrs. Simba, the grade one English teacher commented that, “It is good to punish them when they use Kamba because Kamba does not appear in any subject. You know most of the subjects are tested in English. So, I think that is the best” (Interview, June, 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010). Therefore according to Mrs. Simba, because all subjects were written in English and tests were in English, this called for those who spoke Kamba to be punished. The punishment was usually hitting the children with a stick on either their hands or buttocks or making them kneel down. This punishment was supported by several teachers for other reasons as well. The following comment is from another lower grade teacher like Mrs. Simba:

Because these pupils use Kamba at home when they use Swahili and English they will be able to communicate with the non-Kamba students and also be able to read and understand questions. There is no exam set in Kamba. The children who speak Kamba are punished at school because if it is allowed the school will be in a mess because the Luos, Kikuyu, Meru, Masai and the rest will use their mother tongues as well. So communication will be difficult. (Interview, July, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010)

So, the above teacher states that if students were to be allowed to speak their mother tongues in the school, this would be messy. However, life is itself messy. Being linguistically and socially diverse is the standard in the Kenyan society and other multilingual societies in the

world as well. Also, she laments that communication would be impossible if students were to speak in their mother tongues, and she mentions that examinations are written in English just like Mrs. Simba stated.

It was not only the teachers who supported the banning and punishing of Kamba users in the school, but also most of the parents and the students with whom I spoke. For example, Malaika's mother, one of the children in grade one, said the following concerning this practice: "It is good to punish (her daughter, if she dared speak Kamba at school) because she has to be trained through the hard way for her to know the official language and speak it frequently" (Interview, July, 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010). Malaika's mother supported this punishing so that her daughter may know English. Also, the mother of Kasuku, one of the focal children in the study, had the same idea as the mother of Malaika and other parents as well. She said, "They should be punished so that they can gain experience of the national and official languages. It will be much better if English instruction starts earlier than standard [grade] four to minimize language interference problem" (interview, July, 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010). Kasuku's mother like most parents supported the banning and punishing of those children who spoke Kamba for the sake of learning English and Swahili.

However, these parents did not know punishing a child for speaking a given language is considered depriving children of their rights and also their identity (UNESCO, 2008). I do know where these parents were coming from. They went through the same practices when they were children, and they thought that is how languages should be learned. In fact, Kasuku's mother felt like other parents I spoke to; the English only policy should begin right from grade one not even grade four in the entire country. I agree with the mother of Tausi, one of the focal children who said the following concerning the banning of Kamba and punishing of Kamba speakers in the school:



It is wrong not to teach Kamba because it is from this language where the children learn to communicate in the other languages. On the other hand, punishing is not kind and should not be so because children should be allowed to communicate more in order to develop their language skills. (Interview, July, 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

Tausi's mother seems to know something about language learning. She knows first languages or mother tongues are resources in second language learning (Cummins, 2005). In fact, there is no second language without a first language because it is from the first language that a child learns the second one. Also, she does not support the punishing of students for speaking their first language because it is cruel, and children should be allowed to communicate more so as to develop their language skills. This was the only parent among the parents I spoke to who opposed the banning of Kamba in the school and punishing those children who spoke it. All the other parents I spoke to supported these practices.

Moreover, all the students interviewed both lower and upper classes, supported the banning and punishing of Kamba speakers, just like their teachers and parents for two major reasons. These were: first, the multilingual nature of their school (i.e. it had some students who spoke mother tongues other than Kamba plus Kamba speakers); they seemed very proud of this factor about their school; second, exams and textbooks were written in English and therefore they wanted to improve their English and perform well in their exams. None of the students interviewed supported Kamba speaking or teaching in the school. In fact, those I spoke to seemed to look down upon the surrounding schools which taught or used Kamba language. As I spoke with the children about the issue of Kamba, I was left wondering why they did not care about Kamba at all until one day one upper grade student told me, "If you speak in Kamba, you are disobeying the school rules and you need to be punished." Finally, I had my puzzle solved. No student wanted to break the school rules and that was the final. Like one of the school rules was to be in school by 6:30 am and all the students were in school at that time no matter what.

School rules were school rules and if anyone broke them, deserved to be punished. So, if one spoke Kamba, it was breaking of a school rule and she/he had to be punished.

For example, the grade one children knew this rule very well and they kept reminding their classmates who forgot and spoke in Kamba that they would be hit if caught by the teacher speaking it. For illustration see the following conversation between Rafiki and Chiriku two focal children in this study. Before the following conversation, the children had been instructed by the English teacher to open a certain page. Swahili is in italics while Kamba is in bold.

Rafiki: (Opens the page and comments on the picture in the book in Kamba in a soft voice. He is telling it to Chiriku. He seemed to have forgotten the school rule) **Kamwilu nikekuma andu** (the lizard is biting people).

Chiriku: (Says in Swahili) *Unaongea Kikamba! Utagongwa.* (Commenting on the picture) *Ukitemewa mate na hii utakufa* (You are speaking Kamba! You will be hit. (Commenting on the picture) (If you are spit on by this (i.e. lizard) you will die).

Rafiki: (Says in Swahili) *Ukitemewa mate utaacha kuona* (If you are spit on you will stop seeing).

Chiriku: (Says in Swahili) *Mtoto hawezi kuona hii* (A child cannot see this (i.e. the lizard). (Field notes, June, 9<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

Looking at the above conversation between Rafiki and Chiriku, Chiriku was being a good friend to Rafiki who reminded him of the consequences of speaking Kamba in school. Rafiki switched immediately to Swahili because he did not want to be hit. For those grade one children who could not speak Swahili or English this forced them to be silent all day for the fear of being punished. They behaved as if they were deaf and dumb. In fact, the English teacher gave the example of Kambua who was always quiet in the classroom and in the school. She said, “Most of the time she is quiet because she does not have a medium of communication.” This child had a medium of communication- Kamba. What she did not have was the school’s medium of communication. This was a great torture for such children. I believe no child should be exposed to this kind of inhumane condition. School should be like a second home where the children should bring and exploit all the language resources they have. However, this was not the case at

Kalimani primary school. Kamba was treated like an impediment to learning of other languages and therefore, learning in general. Because first grade children were English language learners, translating from English to Swahili was a very common practice in this classroom for communication purposes. Therefore, next I will examine this practice in the classroom.

**Translation practice.** All textbooks apart from the Swahili ones were written in English and so were the exams. In grade one classroom, translating from English to Swahili or vice versa was a very common practice in English lessons and other content subjects like Math, Social Studies, and Science. The English teacher, Mrs. Simba, said the following when I asked her which languages were used in the English classroom,

We use especially Swahili to explain and elaborate meaning; for them [the children] to know the meaning. First, you use Swahili to explain even in upper levels you explain in Swahili for them to know the meaning of the words. If it is “going” you translate in Swahili, you also demonstrate; either you choose students to demonstrate or the teacher herself demonstrates. (Interview, June, 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

Therefore according to Mrs. Simba, Swahili was used for the purposes of communication in grade one and other classes. The teachers translated the unfamiliar English words to Swahili for the children to understand them. Thus, Swahili was used as a resource in grade one unlike Kamba which was not used at all in the English classroom. For illustration of translating in grade one I provide a part of classroom interaction in an English lesson below. In the following example, the class is covering some exercise which involves some actions.

Mrs. Simba: What is Nekoye doing? [Translates in Swahili] *Anafanya nini?*

SS: [They say the action in Swahili] *Anasoma* [She is reading].

Mrs. Simba: *Kusoma ni nini kwa* English? [What is “*kusoma*”[ reading] in English]?  
Some children: Reading.

Mrs. Simba: She is reading. (Field notes, June, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010)

So in the above dialogue, the teacher translated “what is Nekoye doing?” in Swahili and asked for the translation of “*kusoma*” (reading) in English. Translation also occurred in other

lessons as well. This was because the children “did not know English” as they told me in Swahili during my first day, “Hatujui English” [We do not know English]. During my first day with the children, I just chose to speak to them in English to get their reaction. They were quick to tell me, “Hatujui English” [We do not know English]. The fact was that they knew a little bit of English; they were in the process of learning English and needed time and practice. Meanwhile Swahili was used as a resource in instruction and communication in the classroom. It was heartbreaking for me that Kamba was not assigned any official role in the classroom and in the whole school.

It is important to point out that even though the teachers could use both Swahili and English in their instruction, the children were not allowed to do so in their written exercises and tests. For example, in one English exercise the children were supposed to name items. One of these items was “a table” and majority of the children wrote it in Swahili as “meza”. They all got it wrong.

To conclude this language policy and practices section, I would assert that Kalimani primary school which included the teachers, the principal, the parents, and the children was suffering from the “English Exposure Myth” (Soltero, 2004) just like many second language settings. This myth maintains, “Language minority children must be exposed to great amounts of English to become proficient in that language. Moreover, instruction in the native language has been considered a hindrance for the acquisition of English” (Soltero, 2004, p. 50). However, a learner can apply the knowledge acquired in the mother tongue to the second language learning. Hence, in the current study, I questioned the implications of moving to an English-only policy which sought to eradicate the use of mother languages in this Kenyan school. At Kalimani primary school this policy led to some children keeping quiet all day long for fear of speaking a

language (i.e. Kamba) which was not allowed in the school. Also, this kind of policy led to conditioning of children that since speaking mother tongue was breaking of a school rule, then a school rule was a school rule which had to be followed blindly without questioning the authority. The children at Kalimani did not care about their mother tongue-Kamba, at least not in the school context. It was not a language of the school and that was final.

Therefore, the above language policy and practices provided the context which influenced what took place in the grade one classroom during the learning of different subjects throughout the day. This language policy and practices context shaped language learning in English and Swahili. There was also another context which shaped the kinds of language practices which took place in this classroom during English and Swahili learning. This was the physical conditions of the classroom which will be discussed next.

### **The World of the Classroom**

**The physical context.** This classroom had 89 children. The students stayed in this one classroom throughout the day during learning times. Each student had his or her own tiny desk. The classroom had traditional seating arrangement with all desks facing the chalkboard (see appendix M). These desks were very crowded with only a single aisle for the teachers and students to walk back and forth. For this reason, movement in the classroom was restricted. As the students faced the same direction, this meant some students had their backs to others. In addition, there were three boxes, one at the front corner and two at the back which contained classroom textbooks and teachers' materials. One English textbook was shared by eight to nine students, while two or three students shared a Swahili textbook. In the other subjects the situation was like in English with no textbook for Math, only the teacher's copy. There was a major scarcity of literacy and other educational materials in this classroom.

Moreover, the school did not have library. Nor did the school own any information and communication technologies such as type writers, computers, or recorders. There were a few teacher-made wall charts. These contained some of the grammatical elements covered in the classroom, like plural forms and colors. There was also a chalkboard which was a major teaching aid in this classroom. Most of the time the teachers wrote on this chalkboard. They asked students to read or copy what was written on this board. Sometimes, they called students to come and write on the board too. In addition, there was a class timetable or schedule which hung by one of the windows. This timetable had the following subjects listed in it: Math, English, Christian Religious Education (CRE), Social Education and Ethics (SEE), Science, Swahili, Mother tongue, Physical Education, Creative Arts, and Pastoral program. However, subjects like Mother tongue (Kamba), Physical Education, and Creative Arts were not taught. The only subjects taught were English, Swahili, Math, SEE, CRE, and Science. I was informed by the teachers and the school principal that those subjects were not taught because they were not tested at the national level exams at the end of the primary school cycle. However, Pastoral program was not examined but was taught because this school was sponsored by the African Inland Church, and it had to be grounded on the Christian teachings. Every Thursday at 12:00-12:45 pm children from grade 1 to 3 went to the Church (which shared compound with the school) to be taught Christian teachings by the Pastor.

This physical and social context therefore, shaped the kind of literacy practices that took place in this classroom. For example, it was hard for the teachers to interact with each student one on one regularly. To do this, the teacher had to be very creative. The Swahili teacher tried; for instance, she could call out some individual students to read or write words on the board or ask them questions, but usually there was no way to call every child because the children were

very many - 89 students in a room of 28 feet by 14 feet. Also, with only one aisle, movement was curtailed for the teachers to reach the students. This big number of students was a big challenge which the teachers pointed out from time to time. In fact, the Swahili teacher told me many times there was no way to assist all the students who needed extra help from the teacher. Although some were left during remedial/coaching time, this did not help all the students because not all the students could afford to pay for extra coaching after school.

**Language of communication.** The language of communication in this classroom was Swahili in both English and Swahili lessons. In English lesson, English was the language of the textbook but Swahili remained the medium of communication. In Swahili lessons, Swahili was the language of communication and also of the textbook. Kamba which was the mother tongue of these children was not allowed in the classroom and the school compound in general as I have already stated. Kamba could be heard once in a while when the teachers advised the students in a short statement or a single word. The children used Kamba especially if they did not know a Swahili word in Swahili class but not in English class. Both the teachers and the students tried to adhere to the school's policy of not using Kamba anywhere in the school compound. Also, those students who were caught conversing in Kamba were punished as I have already stated.

However, I did not see any child in grade 1 being punished by a teacher for speaking Kamba. It was very rare to hear any Kamba among the children even when the teachers were not present.

**The children.** There were 44 girls and 45 boys. All the children spoke Kamba, Swahili and a little bit of English, particularly memorized phrases, like, "May I go to the bathroom?", "Good morning teacher" etc. The children wore blue and white uniforms. The boys wore blue sweaters and shorts and white shirts. All had haircuts. The girls wore blue sweaters and dresses and white blouses. Some girls had their hair braided while others had haircuts just like the boys.

They all wore black shoes and carried school bags which had exercise books, pencils, and erasers. These bags were put under their desks in the classroom. The children came from low and middle class homes. Some of the children came from single parent homes and others from two parent homes. The parents were working in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya or other towns and cities in Kenya or worked in the community as teachers, small business owners, or cash and subsistence farmers etc.

**The teachers.** The teachers were two females in their late forties. The English teacher, Mrs. Simba also taught Science and Social Education and Ethics. The Swahili teacher, Mrs. Swale also taught Math and Christian Religious Education. Both Mrs. Simba and Mrs. Swale came from the same community as their students. Mrs. Simba's husband was a teacher as well but in a different school. Mrs. Swale's husband worked in the city of Nairobi. Both teachers had attended teachers' colleges and therefore, they qualified as primary school teachers. Both had children who attended this school. Next, I will describe the school day for these children.

**The school day.** The regular timings of the school day were from 7:00 am to 3:00 pm, Monday to Friday. The sequence of events in a typical day followed the following pattern:

6:30- 7:00 am: The children arrived in the classroom. If it was not on Monday or Friday, the days of morning assembly, the children remained in their classroom reading, which was led by peers who knew how to read until 8:20 am when the lessons began.

8:20-11:00 am: This was the first session. Mrs. Swale took attendance during the first period. This was because Math which was taught by her was always the first subject in the morning. She took the attendance quietly without calling the names out. She knew all the children by name. After taking attendance she taught Math which was followed by Swahili. After Swahili the children had (like) ten minutes break for bathroom.

11:00-11:30 am: This was snack time. The children brought snacks from home. During this time they were allowed to talk to each other but in low voices because the other classes were still in session.

11:30-12:40 pm: This was the second session. This was English time followed by Science. These subjects were taught by Mrs. Simba.

12:40-1:30 pm: The children went for lunch during this time. Some parents brought lunch for their children who did not eat at school. The rest of the children either carried their food with them in the morning or they ate from the school's kitchen.



1:30 pm -2:00 pm: This was children's self-study. There were "teacher pupils" (a term in this school) who guided the rest of the children during this time. These were usually peers who knew how to read. They read words written in Swahili from the Swahili textbook and the whole class repeated after them.

2:00 pm -3:00 pm: This was the third session. This was time for Social Education and Ethics or Christian Education followed by review of any other subject which the teacher wished. At 3:00 pm the students who had not paid for extra coaching went home.

3:00 pm – 4:30 pm: This was remedial time or extra coaching which was an after regular hours of school. The students paid for this coaching.

This schedule remained fairly constant throughout the term unless there were exams. The exams were done usually in the first and the second session. During the exam days the class reviewed for the following day's exam in the third session. To situate the reader on the times I have mentioned, next, I will provide the following extract to exemplify what happened during snack time and lunch time. In addition, I will describe what happened in remedial time and assembly time.

***Snack time.*** During snack time the children remained in the classroom. The children talked to each other usually in Swahili.

Mutua who was seated next to the door had a bun in his hand and before he could bite it he looked at it carefully and began to sing to the children next to him smiling:

"Happy birthday to you

Happy birthday to you", as he raised his bun. Four other children seated next to him joined him in singing as they clapped and smiled:

"Happy birthday to you

Happy birthday to you."

The song continued and I turned to one of the focal children- Rafiki who was seated at the back of the classroom next to me. He was taking some porridge from a bottle. When he was done drinking his porridge he stood up and grabbed an English story book from one of the boxes at the back of the classroom and began looking at the pictures from one page to the next. Mutinda joined him in looking at the pictures and they started talking to each other.

Because I wanted to have a general picture of the whole class during this time, I turned my attention to the center of the classroom. I saw Malaika was drinking milk from a packet written UHT in big letters. This is pasteurized milk. Chiriku another focal child was drinking milk as well. Chiriku, Mbula and Kambua were also looking at pictures in a book as they drank and ate their snacks. They were also talking to each other.

I then turned my attention to the front of the classroom, I saw Akilimali who was eating arrow roots and talking to Mhariri (another focal child) who was eating avocado.

Mutungi was eating “githeri” (this is mixture of corn and beans) quietly. While Fadhili (another focal child) was eating pumpkin and sweet potatoes. He was talking with Tausi who was eating “mandazi” (kinds of buns). I thought, “This seems to be the best time of the day for these children as they enjoy eating different Kenyan foods and talking with each other.” (Field notes, July, 9<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

Therefore, snack time was a time to eat and take a little break before the second session of learning. Also, it was a time to share a book with friends. Children talked to each other. The children seemed to love snack time. This is because every day by 10:00 o’clock they asked Mrs. Swale in Swahili, “*Tunaweza kula?*” (Can we eat?)

Next, I provide an excerpt on “lunch time.” My focus was on two focal children: Rafiki and Chiriku. The children were speaking in Swahili. Only a few children chose to eat from the classroom. The rest went outside or in the school kitchen to eat. Swahili is in italics while Kamba is in bold.

Rafiki comes back to the classroom at 1:15 pm from playing outside. I ask him, “*Umemaliza kula?*” [Are you done eating?] And he says, “*Hapana*” [No]. He has not even started eating. He says smiling to Chiriku who was eating beef and rice, “*Chiriku hata mimi nimebeba nyama*” [Chiriku I am also having beef for lunch]. Chiriku does not respond and he tells me, “*Nimebeba nyama*” [I am having beef for lunch] I say smiling, “Mmm.” Chiriku says, “*Hata mimi. Usiku tulipika chips*” [Even me. For dinner we cooked French fries]. Rafiki said, “*Hata sisi hupika chakula kila siku. Tunapika kila siku*” [Even us we usually cook every day. We cook every day]. These two children are busy eating and talking and all of a sudden they stop eating and stand up and say, “*Tunaenda kuona President*” [We are going to see the President]. Surprised, I ask them, “*President yupi?*” [Which President?] They are looking by the window and Chiriku says, “*Ni mtu ameshikwa na lori*” [It is a person in a truck who has been arrested]. While Rafiki says, “*Huyo President alikuwa ndani*” [That president was inside]. Chiriku says, “*Na hiyo lori ilikuwa na mchanga*” [And that truck was carrying sand]. I am confused! Mbula noticing my confusion tries to clarify, “*Huyo alikuwa na lori alishikwa na akapelekwa na polisi*” [The person who had the truck was arrested and taken to the police post by the police]. Rafiki says, “*Ilikuwa imejaa changarawe ndio ikashikwa*” [The truck was full of sand that is why it was arrested]. Mua hearing the story about the lorry adds, “*ilikuwa imeandikwa* [and spells out] **i-t-u-m-o** [It was written, and spells out i-t-u-m-o]. “**Itumo**” [a spear] was a Kamba word. I realized there were two stories going on here: the president’s story and the lorry story. There were rumors in the school that the president was to visit the area and talk to the people about the then proposed Kenyan Constitution. This did not materialize, only the Member of Parliament of this area came and other political and religious leaders. The lorry story- for sure someone had been arrested for

harvesting sand illegally. To harvest sand from the big river near the school, one had to obtain a permit from the District Commissioner's office. The arrested person had not followed this regulation. Anyway, the bell rang and it was time for preps, 1:30-2:00pm. (July, 9<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

Looking at the above extract, it seems lunch time was not a time to eat only; just like snack time, it was a time to talk with friends and tell stories as well. The children also talked about what they had carried for lunch or prepared for dinner.

**Remedial time.** Besides, from 3:00 pm to 4:30 pm, twenty students were left behind as the rest of the students went home. There were two types of students in remedial time. There were “weak students” (teachers’ term for the students who did not know how to read) and their parents wanted them to have extra coaching. The second group of students were those whose parents worked up to 5:00 pm and wanted their children to remain in school until 4:30 pm. Either way, the parents had to pay for these extra services provided by the teachers after the regular school hours at 3:00 pm.

**Morning assemblies.** Usually on Mondays and Fridays from 7:45 am to 8:20 am there was a morning assembly. During the morning assembly, the students and the teachers hoisted the National Flag, recited the National Anthem in Swahili or English. This was followed by singing of two gospel songs either in English or Swahili. I did not hear any Kamba song in the morning assemblies. This was followed by praying which was done by one of the teachers chosen by the teacher on duty. Every week there was a teacher on duty who helped in the running of the school that week for instance, supervising students in the morning preps, supervising cleaning, etc. The teacher prayed in English, Swahili or Kamba (teachers were not punished for speaking Kamba!) After praying there were weekly announcements in Swahili or English from the teacher on duty, the senior teacher, the deputy principal, and the principal. These announcements varied from the media of communication of the school to tardiness and school levies. After these

announcements, the assembly was over and the students rushed to their classes.

With this background, I will examine in the next two chapters, how the official language curriculum was expressed in grade 1 classroom, that is, how spoken and written language was taught and learned, how children participated in the official speaking, reading, and writing activities, and the nature of teacher-child relationship (i.e. monologic or dialogic) during different classroom practices or genres. I will also question whose voice is being heard? First, I will focus on the English class followed by Swahili. In each subject, I will examine and discuss the oral and written curricula's practices.

## **Chapter 6**

### **The Official English Language Curriculum**

In analyzing the data in this chapter and the next one, I draw from sociocultural and dialogic frameworks. The data revealed that language learning and literacy are context-bound. In other words, language learning and literacy cannot be divorced from their sociocultural, ideological, and physical contexts. As the teachers and the students interacted, they enacted particular practices or genres that were shaped by the sociocultural, ideological, and physical contexts of the classroom, school, and the country. The culture of this classroom was therefore marked by these practices. I will discuss how learning took place by analyzing these practices which were enacted in the classroom. As I analyze the different practices in the classroom, I will examine what kinds of social interactions were enacted: In what ways were they dialogic or monologic in nature? Whose voice was represented in the classroom? Also, I will discuss how the sociocultural, ideological, and physical contexts shaped the interactions and practices in the classroom. Finally, I consider the implications of the observed kinds of interactions may have on language learning and literacy development.

Bakhtin sees monologic discourse as:

Direct, unmediated, and referentially oriented in that it recognizes only itself and its object, to which it strives to be maximally adequate. The speaker says what he wants to say as if there were no question that his way of saying it will accomplish his purpose, and that there could be no other equally adequate way. (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 148)

Therefore, according to Bakhtin, monologic discourse is a single-voiced discourse that acknowledges only itself and its word. Also, it is a discourse that does not recognize other people's words. In addition, a dialogue is a "special sort of interaction" (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 49). It is a double-voiced discourse that contains an intentional reference to someone else's words. Such discourse inserts a new meaning into a discourse which already has, and

which retains, an intention of its own (Morson & Emerson, 1990). In other words, monologic discourse is “a form of thinking that turns dialogue into an empty form and a lifeless interaction” (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 57). In this chapter, I viewed the English teacher and the students as having either a dialogue or a monologue in their classroom interactions.

English language subject had three major lessons: writing, reading, and speaking. This was well shown by the teacher’s lesson plan. Although the three at times were inseparable, for the sake of clarity, I will discuss each separately. Under each lesson, I will look at the practices which took place during that time. In each lesson, I will exemplify what each involved by first, looking at lesson plans and schemes of work. “Schemes of work” are teacher’s plan of work from the syllabus showing what is to be covered within a specified period of time. A lesson plan is a detailed outline of work derived from the schemes of work. It guides the teacher during teaching/learning activities on a daily basis. Also, I will look at the class text which was an authority in the class. It is important to note that it was compulsory for the teachers to have these two documents (i.e. lesson plan and schemes of work) with them in the classroom. The lesson plan was always supposed to be on the teacher’s desk when she taught, while schemes of work was supposed to be somewhere in the classroom for easy reference if need be. I will first examine the writing curriculum, followed by reading, and then speaking. It is important to note that literacy in this classroom seemed to be detached from the children’s experiences. I associated such kind of learning to the contexts in which these children learned.

### **The Enacted Writing Curriculum**

The daily official writing practices in this grade one classroom were instantiated by students copying off the board the teacher’s written down words, phrases, and sentences. The teacher took this daily board work from the textbook. Paragraphs, however, were copied directly

from the textbook by the students. Moreover, the students filled in blank spaces, and responded to both oral and board questions on grammatical elements. The teacher dictated words for the children to write as well. These practices which took place during writing lesson were well illustrated by the teacher's lesson plans, schemes of work, and the class text. Below I provide one example of a lesson plan which will be followed by a summary of what was in the schemes of work and textbook to function as a foundation for the discussion on classroom interactions. See below for an illustration of English teacher's lesson plan on writing.

### **Lesson plan.**

Date: 17 - 6 – 2010

Topic: Writing

Objective: Pupils will be able to answer questions correctly

REF: Primary English page 72

Other Resources: Pictures in the book

#### **Lesson Development**

##### Teacher's Activity

Guide pupils to read sentence structures.

Guide pupils to answer oral questions.

Guide pupils to answer questions in their exercise books.

Guide pupils to do corrections orally.

##### Pupils' Activity

Pupils to read sentence structures.

Pupils to answer oral questions.

Pupils to answer questions in their exercise books.

Pupils to do corrections in their exercise books.

Blackboard Plan [This is what is copied on the board from the text]

1. She drank tea at \_\_\_\_\_

2. He brought the milk at \_\_\_\_\_

3. He spoke to the teacher at \_\_\_\_\_ (Mrs. Simba's lesson plan, 6-17-2010)

From the above lesson plan, it is clear that the official writing curriculum in this classroom was presented by children answering questions in their exercise books and copying from the chalkboard. In addition, looking at the lesson development portion the teacher states, "The pupils will read sentence structures and answer oral questions in their exercise books." Hence, writing in this classroom is also marked by answering questions orally and reading

sentence structures. Furthermore, the objective of the teacher is for the pupils to be able to answer questions correctly by the end of the lesson. Finally, knowing how to read seems to be the end result as well.

**Schemes of work.** Moreover, looking at the schemes of work, other activities besides what is in the above lesson plan included: pupils filling gaps and pupils copying sentences and letters like Q and words corresponding with the letter, like Quill, Queen, Quit, Queue.

**Class text.** As the textbook was the authority in this class, the lesson plans and schemes of work were a duplicate of what was in the class text. The textbook, though, was a duplicate of the national syllabus. The following were the writing topics from the first page of the text to the last:

- i) copying letters of the alphabet (e.g. a to z),
- ii) copying words (e.g. come),
- iii) copying sentences (e.g. Today Tuva is going to India),
- iv) writing the correct word from the box (e.g. This is Ali. He is \_\_\_\_\_ ),
- v) completing sentences (e.g. This is \_\_\_\_\_ (picture of a plough) and a \_\_\_\_\_ (picture of a knife),
- vi) drawing patterns of letters (e.g. a),
- vii) drawing a clock face and showing the time,
- viii) drawing a child and naming parts of the body,
- ix) drawing, naming, and coloring different items (e.g. a bus \_\_\_\_\_ ).
- x) filling in missing letters (e.g. mon\_\_tor),
- xi) filling in blank spaces (e.g. The second month of the year is \_\_\_\_\_ ),
- xii) filling in spaces with the correct plural word (e.g. cup – cups),



- xiii) matching a picture with the correct word from the box (e.g. the picture of a bed with the word “bed”),
- xiv) counting pictures and answering the corresponding questions (e.g. counting the number of trees drawn and answering the question, How many trees are there? There are \_\_\_\_\_ trees).

In sum, looking at the class text, writing may be summarized as copying or writing the letters of the alphabet, words and sentences, filling in blanks with the correct letters or words or completing words with the correct letter or completing a sentence with the correct word from the choices given or from memory, matching a picture with its word, drawing different letter patterns, and drawing different items, coloring and naming them. Consequently, this is a structured writing program. After examining the three important documents in this classroom, I now turn to the classroom interactions to illustrate how the above activities unfolded in the classroom.

**Classroom interactions and writing practices.** From a sociocultural approach, social interactions like classroom interactions are crucial to language learning because language is both mediated and inseparable from the setting in which it is carried out (Hall & Walsh, 2002). Social relations or relations among people underlie all higher functions that mediate human action on both social and individual planes (Wertsch, 1991). In this chapter, classroom interactions were viewed as central to learning. Hence, classroom instruction should be designed to foster a social and material environment where learners are encouraged to negotiate participation in meaningful activities and the quality of assistance from the teacher and peers must be coordinated to determine the appropriate level to meet learners’ needs. If these conditions take place, learners

can accomplish central goals, first, through assisted participation and later on their own (Ortega, 2007).

The major interaction which took place in this English lesson classroom was teacher-students interaction where the classroom discourse was dominated by IRE (Initiation, Response, and Evaluation) interaction structure (Cazden, 2001; Mehan, 1979). This IRE teacher-controlled interaction was also monologic in nature. The IRE patterns of interactions will be exemplified as the practices unfold. During writing lessons the teacher and the students first read different words, sentences, and paragraphs which she later asked the students to copy off the board or sometimes from the textbook, especially paragraphs. Reading always preceded writing in this classroom. These practices are exemplified below.

***Copying off the board.*** Copying off the board included copying of words and sentences. Usually, the teacher copied these words and sentences from the class text. Some children faced challenges as they copied these words and sentences off the board. These copying challenges will also be discussed.

***Copying words.*** In the following excerpt, the class was on the unit, “Colors and Shapes.” It is important to note that the class covered one unit per week according to the schemes of work. In this lesson, as soon as the class completed reading different colors which the teacher had written on the chalkboard, she instructed the students to copy and color. Swahili is in italics.

Mrs. Simba: [Said in Swahili] *Haya, andika na upake rangi* (Okay, copy and color). [The teacher had copied the color words from the text on page 65.]

SS: [They are copying the names of colors and coloring them]. The colors are:

1. Black
2. White
3. Brown
4. Blue
5. Green
6. Yellow
7. Red

## 8. Orange

[The crayons and colored pencils were on each child's desk]. (Field notes, June, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010)

Rafiki's work in figure 6.1 exemplifies what exactly the students did.

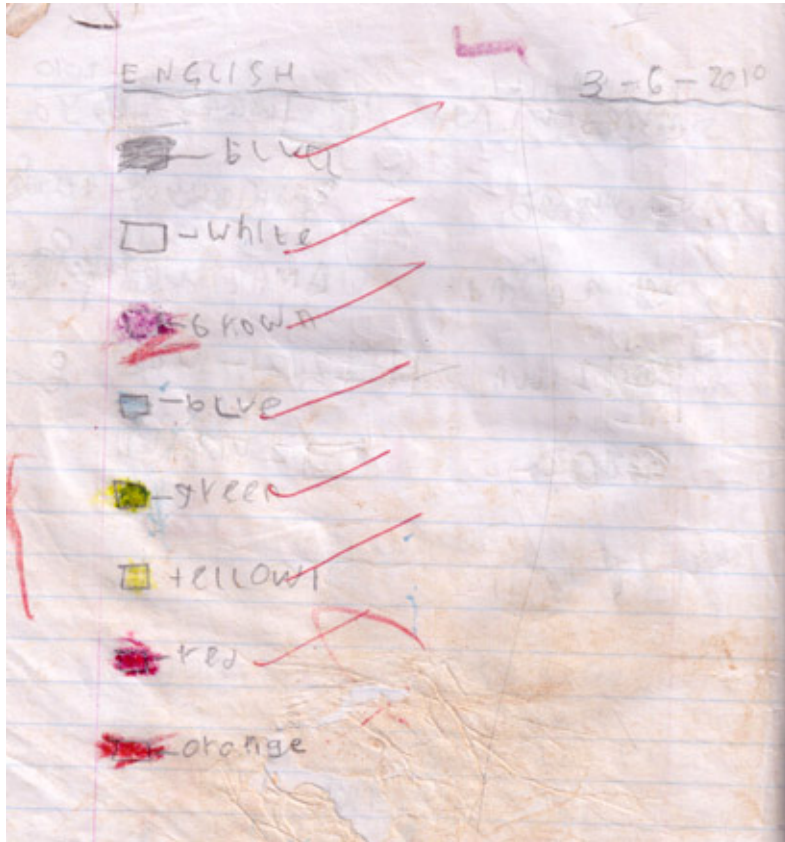


Fig. 6.1 Rafiki's Work

From the above extract and Rafiki's writing, it is clear that the students copied the names of colors and also colored the appropriate colors. When the students did the work they were quiet. Once a child was done coloring he or she took his or her exercise book to the teacher quietly to be graded as can be seen on Rafiki's exercise book. Therefore, copying was an individual exercise for the students. Furthermore, what was written on the chalkboard was what the teacher thought was important and it represented teacher's voice but not that of the children.

In addition, I present another example to show that copying off the board was not as easy as it may seem. In this example, the class was on the unit, “Months of year”. The class first read sentences/statements covering different months of the year. The teacher had written statements/sentences on all the months of the year but she instructed the students to copy statements/sentences from August to December. This was a source of confusion for some of the students who copied all the sentences down because they were seeing them on the chalkboard. Some like the second child in the examples below copied from January to August. The following were the statements on the board:

1. January-the first month of the year.
2. February- the second month of the year.
3. March- the third month of the year.
4. April- the fourth month of the year.
5. May- the fifth month of the year.
6. June- the sixth month of the year.
7. July- the seventh month of the year.
8. August- the eighth month of the year.
9. September- the ninth month of the year.
10. October – the tenth month of the year.
11. November -the eleventh month of the year.
12. December –the twelfth month of the year. (Field notes, June, 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

The students copied the above sentences/statement on their exercise books however, this copying was not that simple as I have already stated. For some children it was not easy to copy those sentences/statements. For example, see writings of two of the children (Elisha and Kanini) in this classroom:

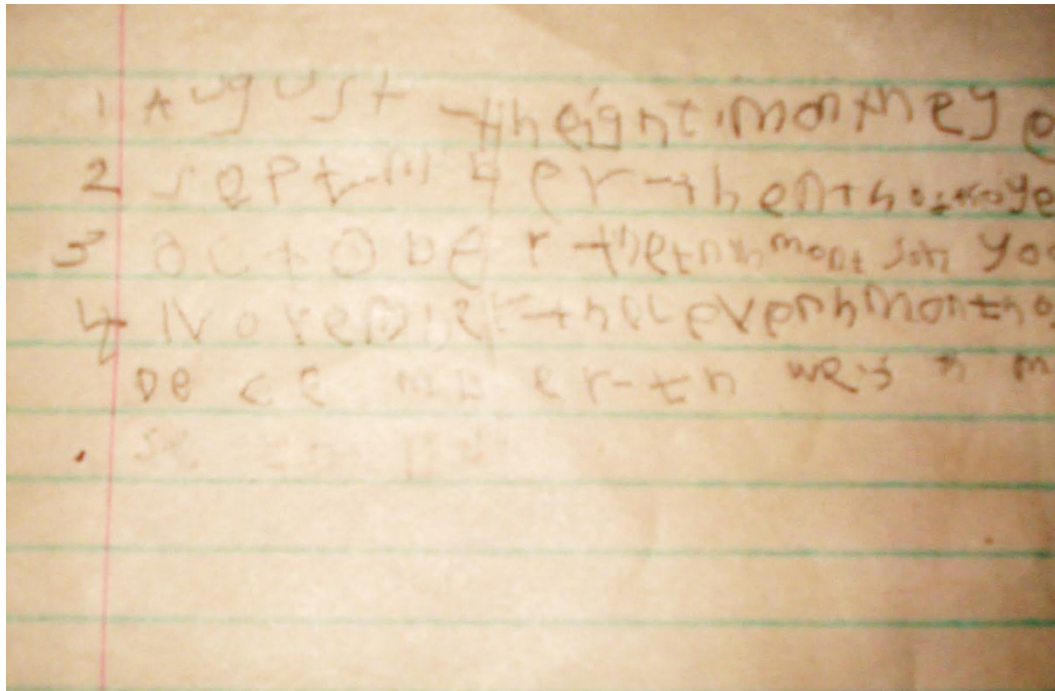


Fig. 6.2 Kanini's Writing

In the above example, Kanini managed to write in a straight line and from left to right; however, she had yet to learn how to space words.

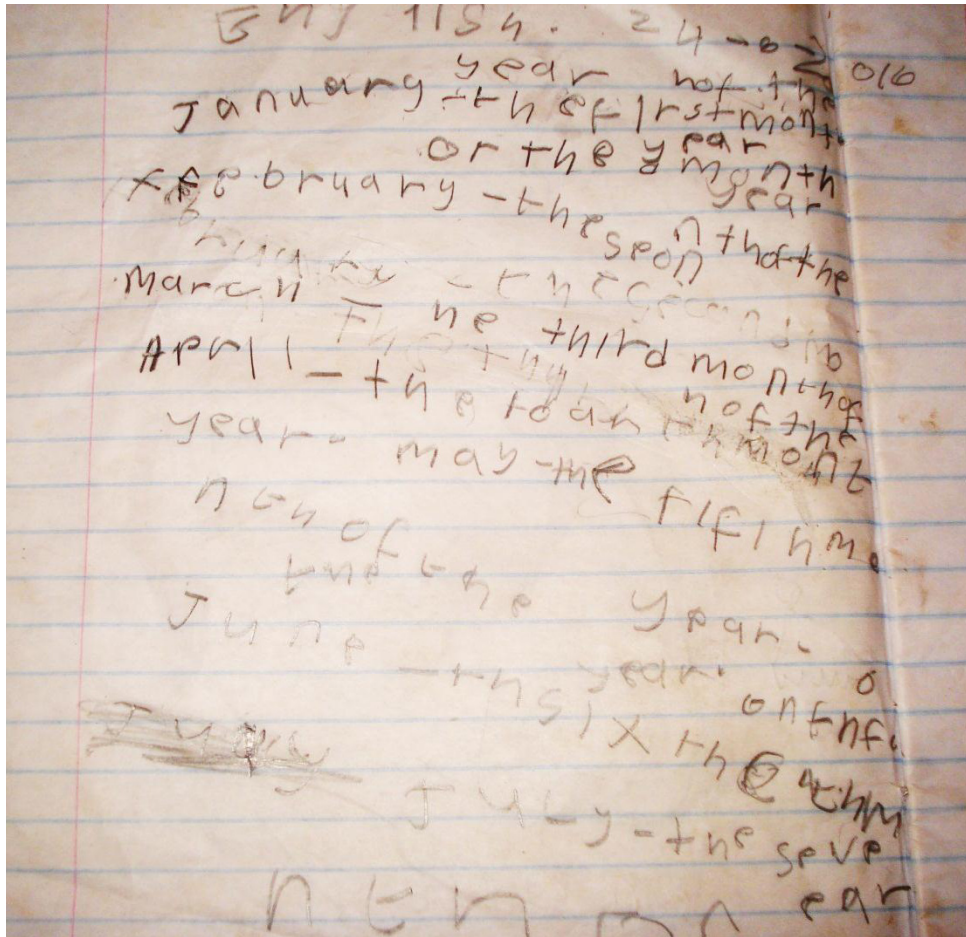


Fig. 6.3 Elisha's Writing

Moreover, Elisha who did the above work had yet to learn how to write in a straight line and also to control her spacing of words which she had managed in some of the words.

Furthermore, she did not follow the teacher's instruction of copying from August to December; she copied from January to July. It is important to note that the teacher did not have time to grade all the students work; and, in fact, she did not see any of the above writings. A teacher/pupil ratio of 1:89 meant that the chance of the teacher seeing every child's book was not assured. This large class was a big challenge for the teachers in terms of grading and also being able to interact with every student. In addition, students copied paragraphs from either the textbook or off the board. It all depended on the choice of the teacher.

*Copying paragraphs from the textbooks or off the board.* Sometimes, in this classroom there were long readings and the teacher instructed the students to copy them directly from the textbooks. However, if it was a short paragraph they copied it off the chalkboard. It is important to note that the textbooks (11 textbooks among 89 students) were very few and this explains why the teacher preferred most of the time to use the chalkboard so that all the students could see well. For example, after they read the following paragraph from the textbook, the teacher instructed the students to copy the paragraph in their books. This was:

This is Mr. and Mrs. Kenga.  
They have three children.  
Their son is called Juma.  
Their daughter is called Amina.  
Their baby is called Fatuma. (P. 34).

The children copied the above paragraph directly from the textbook. It is of importance to note that the children did not write anything about their family. They only learned about Kenga's family (the family in the textbook). This example illustrates how writing in this classroom was detached from the experiences of the children. I observed the same thing when the class covered different colors, the teacher did not relate the lesson on colors on the children's clothes like their school uniform or the National Flag which was part of the children's everyday life. The National Flag was hoisted every Monday and Friday mornings. The National Flag has different colors (i.e. black, white, and red). See the following extract which is part of a lesson on reading to elaborate my point that learning English language was done in an abstract manner. The students were reading page 66 of the class text.

Mrs. Simba: What color is her uniform?  
SS: What color is her uniform?  
Mrs. Simba: What color is her uniform?  
SS: What color is her uniform?  
Mrs. Simba: Her uniform is green and orange.  
SS: Her uniform is green and orange.

Mrs. Simba: Her uniform is green and orange.  
SS: Her uniform is green and orange.  
Mrs. Simba: What color is it?  
SS: What color is it?  
Mrs. Simba: What color is it?  
SS: What color is it?  
Mrs. Simba: It is green and orange.  
SS: It is green and orange.  
Mrs. Simba: It is green and orange.  
SS: It is green and orange. [Field notes, June, 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010]

The children's uniform was blue and white. Blue dresses and shorts and white blouses and shirts. However, the teacher did not relate these colors to their own clothes. Hence, this was an abstract way to learn a language. English language seemed to be detached from the children's lives and their daily experiences. Writing was also detached from their lives and daily experiences as well. For example, in the paragraph on family they did not write anything about their families. Therefore, writing seemed to have no purpose in their lives and experiences. Furthermore, it is the monologic voice of the textbook which is being heard and seen on the children's work in this classroom. The children's voices which could have been presented by bringing in their experiences are not included and therefore their voice is nowhere to be heard or seen on paper. I associated this kind of learning language in an abstract way with the language policy of the school which emphasized writing, reading, and speaking in English only. These children from their point of view and that of their teacher had very limited knowledge of English. Thus, they seemed to fall back on the textbook as their only resource for learning English. Another form of writing in this class was in the form of responding to board questions on grammatical forms which is discussed next.

***Responding to board questions on grammatical forms.*** The students responded to different grammatical forms which were written on the board. For instance:



*Past tense.* In the following example, the students were to give the past tense of words which they had first done with the teacher on the board and then they were to do the exercise on their own. The teacher had instructed them in Swahili, “*Sasa nataka uniandikie na good handwriting na wale ambao wataandika good handwriting nitawaandika kwa kitabu changu*” [Now I want you to write in a good handwriting and those who will write in a good handwriting I will write them in my book]. The teacher wanted to have a record of those who had good handwriting. The students viewed being in that book as an achievement or a reward from the teacher. In the example below, the teacher had erased the words in the past tense and wanted the children to write them down. The teacher had written present tense as “today” and past tense as “yesterday”.

<u>Today</u>	<u>Yesterday</u>
1. Drink	_____
2. Bring	_____
3. Speak	_____
4. Take	_____ (Field notes, June, 17 <sup>th</sup> , 2010)

The above exercise was on the irregular forms of past tense. Although they had done the above exercise with the teacher before they did it alone, some children had given past tense of bring as “bringed” and speak as “speaked”. These children exhibited overgeneralizing rule (Brown & Bellugi, 2001) of “-ed” in the past tense which they had covered previously. Moreover, another form of writing which was covered in this class and written on the board was filling in of letters.

***Filling in letters to complete words.*** In the exercise below, the children filled in the blanks which the teacher had written on the board. They first answered as a whole class and later the teacher told them to fill in the letters individually in their exercise books. She had erased the letters.

1. B \_by
2. B \_ok
3. Ch \_lk
4. M \_nitor
5. T \_metable
6. Fl \_or
7. R \_ler
8. R \_gister
9. Tr \_e
10. C \_w.

Prior to the above exercise, the following interaction had taken place. Swahili is in italics.

[The teacher called the children by their names to answer the questions. She called both who were shouting “teacher” and raising their hands and also those who were not raising their hands].

Mrs. Simba: Musau

Musau: o [he filled o for floor]

Mrs. Simba: Very good Musau. It is o. Musau *amepata* [has got it]. Register (writes r\_ gister.) what is the missing letter?

One student: s

Mrs. Simba: No. *Mwingine* [Somebody else]. [Calls on other children].

Mumbi: i

Ndinda: a

Mrs. Simba: [She calls out another child] Mutia.

Mutia: s

SS: Teacher, teacher.

Mrs. Simba: [Pointing to the word “register”] Akilimali, which word is this?

Akilimali: Register

Mrs. Simba: Good. Register [Writes “e” in the blank space]. *Haya andika* [Okay write]. [She erases the letters and tells them to fill in the missing letters. Most children begin writing but some are seated idle while others are writing. Some children are talking to each other and not doing the work they were instructed to do and they face the wrath of the teacher].

Mrs. Simba: *Leta fimbo* [Bring a cane]. [She is given a cane. She canes each two strokes on their hands].

SS: [Every child begins writing].

Mrs. Simba: [Steps out].

[I hear Rafiki and Chiriku who are seated in front of me say]:

Rafiki: *Niko* [I’m on] number nine.

Chiriku: *Niko* [I’m on] number six.

[A child comes to me and says]: *Niende msalani* [May I go to the bathroom]?

Esther: *Mwambie mwalimu* [tell the teacher].

Mbula: [She is sounding out the words in whispers as she fills the letters].

Mrs. Simba: [Walks in]. Have you finished? *Yule amemaliza nataka kummakia* [whoever is done I want to grade for them].

SS: [Some say] *Hatujambaliza* [We are not yet done].  
 Mrs. Simba: [Grades a few books from the students' desks].  
 [She comes to me and tells me she would like to go somewhere and children should put their books on the table at the back of the classroom]. [Instructed] Kaleo [the class prefect], write *wale wanaongea* [down those who are talking].  
 Muange: *Mwalimu nimefika* [teacher I am in] number 2.  
 Malaika: *Tafadhali naweza kwenda msalani* [Please may I go to the bathroom]?  
 Mrs. Simba: *Wale wanaotaka kwenda msalani waende* [Those who want to go to the toilet go]. [Field notes, May, 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010]

From the above extract it is clear that once the teacher instructed the students to begin copying or writing, that was a command and it was to be obeyed immediately. It was even worse for those children who talked to each other because they got punished. If the teacher was not present in class, Kaleo (the class prefect) or other appointed children wrote the names down of those who talked. They got punished later by the teacher. In addition, the children got an opportunity to talk to each other however brief when the teacher stepped out. In the above example, Chiriku told Rafiki and vice versa which number they were in. Although the children got to talk to each other this was discouraged by having the prefect act as a teacher's eye.

Also, it seemed that some of the students were not familiar with the English sound system. Two children gave "s" as the letter to fill the blank for "R\_\_ gister". The English teacher did not teach English sounds. She told me sounds were covered in preschool. However, the National English Syllabus for grade one states that, "pre-reading and pre-writing activities should be well done, so as to bring all the learners to the same level" (Kenya Institute of Education, 2006, p. 3). Thus, from this important education document in Kenya, teachers should be sensitive to their learners' needs and assist where possible. I see the errors made by the students as teaching moments which the teacher missed. She had an opportunity to teach the children then about the sound system in English but that opportunity was let go. When a child missed the letter, the teacher said "no" or/and called on other students to answer.

This classroom interaction represents the traditional classroom interaction pattern (Cazden, 2001) or IRE classroom interaction (Mehan, 1979); the teacher Initiates (questions), student Responds, and the teacher Evaluates. IRE is a monologic interaction where the “teachers thwart dialogue” (Nystrand, 1997, p. 29) by directing the nature of participation in a classroom exchange. In the above exchange, the teacher’s evaluations were “good” or “no”. These evaluations did not open an opportunity for a dialogue. As already stated there were no connections made with what was read or written down to the children’s lives. One reason for this kind of classroom interaction has been associated with the examinations’ pressure in Kenya where the teachers are constrained by examinations which are narrow in what they test (Ackers & Hardman, 2001; Pontefract & Hardman, 2005; Sifuna, 1997). The nature of these exams will be discussed later in the chapter. In other words, the pressure to get through the syllabuses and cover the required material often meant that teachers overemployed teacher-directed methods at the expense of creating opportunities for pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning. Hence, even though the exams are seen as a standardized assessment, in practice they seemed to promote rote learning like seen above. Dictation was also another form of writing which took place in this classroom.

***Dictation.*** The teacher either dictated words from the textbook or a past exam paper. In the example below, the teacher was dictating words from the textbook. This dictation came immediately after the teacher and students had completed reading sentences on colors. Swahili words are italicized.

Mrs. Simba: *Chukua kitabu uandike kitu* [Get your book and write something down], dictation.

Fadhili: *Mwalimu tuandike zote?* [Teacher do we copy all?] [He thought they were copying words which were on the chalkboard].

Mrs. Simba: [Quiet, does not answer Fadhili]. Write the word “yellow” *kwa kitabu chako* [in your book]. The word, yellow.

Rafiki: [Has written] “the word yellow.”

Another girl: [Has written] “color.”

Mrs. Simba: Write the word, bird. Number three, egg. Number four, green. [Some children have not written anything down]. Number five, blue.

SS [Some]: *Mwalimu*, number two *ni nini*? [Teacher, number two is what?]

Mrs. Simba: *Sitarudia* [I won’t repeat] [dictates to number 10].

[Some children are copying from each other and copying wrong things].

Mrs. Simba: *Mhariri warudie. Mhariri warudie.* [She is not yet done] *Maliza uwasomee. Haya weka vitabu hapa tuwasomee.* [Mhariri repeat for them. Mhariri repeat for them [she is not yet done]]. Finish up and read for them. Okay. Put your books here we read for you].

Rafiki: Tausi number eight *ni nini* [is what]? [He moves over three desks to reach Tausi].

Mambo: *Mwalimu* [Teacher] number eight *ni nini* [is what]?

Mrs. Simba: [Quiet, she has refused to repeat once more and says] *si lazima upate kila kitu.* [It is not a must you get everything correct]. [This is a contradiction because children are punished when they do not perform well].

Mutia: [Tells me] *Mwalimu, huyu ananiibia* [teacher, he is copying from me.]

[Interestingly, this is one of the girls who was copying wrong things from the rest].

Esther: [Smiles].

[Some children in Rafiki’s row are checking spellings from the textbook for the word “brown”. One girl says, “Brown *ni nini* [is what]”?

Mrs. Simba: Bring your books.

SS: [Some take their books to the teacher].

[Most children are not done and they are copying from the textbook. A lot of commotion reigns. They are not sure what to write. Elisha is browsing through the textbook when it is upside down. Elisha asks something from a friend. She is copying from Mutia who was copying from another girl as well. Elisha has not taken her book to the teacher’s desk].

[Field notes, June, 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010]

In the above episode, the students were caught off guard by the dictation. Surprisingly, the teacher gave the children a spelling exercise yet she did not cover any spelling practice with them. During my observations, I did not see any single day that the teacher did spelling practice with the children. That is why the children were requesting the teacher to repeat the words but she refused. One child was copying from the textbook when it was upside down and another one did not know what “brown” was. Moreover, they were copying from each other and worse still copying wrong things. The teacher refused to repeat the words for the children, yet this was the approach she used in the class, that is, repeating many times. I consider the teacher’s refusal to children’s requests as one limitation of a monologic kind of interaction which does not value

other's voice but only recognizes itself (Morson & Emerson, 1990). The teacher only recognized her own voice and that of the textbook but seemed to silence that of the children. However, the teacher's intentions of individual conference became a group conference which I see as an effort by the children to take control of their own learning. They wanted to write down what was right and this is why when the teacher failed to repeat the words for example, Rafiki went to Tausi to get some help and so did the other children in class. It did not matter if it was wrong or right. Again, I see this as a lost opportunity to engage the children in their own learning by the teacher because of the "tightly scripted lesson" or a monologic interaction (Nystrand, 1997, p. 22) which does not have space for the other's voice. I also attribute this to the exam pressure where the teacher was only worried on drilling children for the passing of examination. In the next example, the teacher was dictating from a past exam paper in preparation for the end of the term exam.

*Dictating from a past paper.* In the following illustration, the teacher read each word twice and told the children once they were done with the writing of the word to raise their hands. However, only a few raised their hands and she just continued dictating. In this exercise, the teacher just went straight to dictation; there was no reading before the dictation exercise. This was done purposely to test the children's ability to spell in preparation for exams which were to be administered that following week.

Mrs. Simba: *Anza* [Begin] number one. Number one, *andika* [write] the word "bag." The word "bag." *Ukiandika inua mkono nione umeandika* [Once you are done raise your hand to be sure you have written it down].

SS: [Only a few students raise their hands].

Mrs. Simba: Number two, "door," "door." *Ukimaliza inua mkono nione umeandika* [Once you are done raise your hand to be sure you have written it down].

SS: [Only a few students raise their hands].

Mrs. Simba: Number three, write the word "chalk," "chalk." *Ukimaliza inua mkono* [Once you are done raise your hand].

SS: [Only a few students raise their hands].

Mrs. Simba: Number four, “desk”. Number five, “ruler”. Akilimali *wasomee kutoka* [read for them from] number one.

Akilimali: [Reads]

1. Bag
2. Door
3. Chalk
4. Desk
5. Ruler

Mrs. Simba: *Haya tujibu* [Let’s answer].

SS: [Different children give the spellings of the above words]. [Only a few have got everything correct. Rafiki had written “bag” as “bird”. I guess he heard “bird” instead of “bag”]. (Field notes, July, 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

The above exercise was meant for exam review and its approach was quite different from the normal classroom writing practices. Usually, under usual classroom practices like copying off board and dictating from the textbook, the teacher and the students first did a reading which was related to the writing exercise. In this exercise the teacher went straight to the dictation. She also went through the answers with the students without the usual grading. In this exercise I saw the institutional context come into play. English was the language of the examination and in this exercise unlike the other writing exercises where the teacher even code switched into Swahili (i.e. translating words into Swahili) this did not happen when it came to “mock exams” like the above dictation exercise. The teacher adhered strictly to the English only policy of the exam. Also, the physical context of a large and crowded class came into play. Because the teacher could not grade all the children’s work immediately she opted to go through the answers with the children and actually she asked who got everything correct. Passing of examinations was a very important aspect in this classroom and other classrooms as well in the school and therefore, the teacher put all efforts in making sure she prepared the children for the exams. One way, to prepare the children, for this teacher was through having these “mock exams” and drills. High-stakes testing will be discussed later under “examinations.”

**Handwriting.** Handwriting was also another writing practice which took place in this classroom. Usually, there was handwriting at the end of each unit. The following extract illustrates what happened under handwriting. Swahili words are in italics.

Mrs. Simba: [Distributes 11 textbooks among 89 students]. [They review the previous exercise as a class]. *Hufanye halafu unifanyie hiyo* [Review and then, you do for me the] handwriting *iko hapo chini* page 69 [which is below there on page 69]. [Mrs. Simba writes on the board q pattern].

Tausi: *Mwalimu tuanze?* [Teacher, do we begin?]

Mrs. Simba: *Anza* [Begin]. *Huendelea na hiyo imeandikwa hivyo* [continue with the one written this way]: qqqqqqqqqqqqqqqqqqqq *na uendelea na* [and then continue with] quill, queen, quit [she reads as she writes]. [Field notes, June, 9<sup>th</sup>, 2010]

Therefore, under handwriting the students drew letter patterns, copied letters, and words in their exercise books. This had to be done at the end of each unit. In the following extract on handwriting I elaborate on this practice:

The students copied small letters i, t, and l patterns, copied capital letters I, T, and L, copied the words: ink, time, letter, tonight. The teacher had copied these words and letters from the textbook on page 74. The students copied from the chalkboard to their exercise books without reading or saying the letters. The focus was only on the mechanics of handwriting and that was it. (Field notes, June, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010)

From the above extract, handwriting was treated as an art. It was not to be read. It was to be seen. There was no time I observed the teacher read the words or the letters with the students. Sometimes, she just read as she wrote but the students did not read them. The words were to be written on the exercise books as “handwriting.” Also, when I asked the teacher what activities occurred in her classroom during writing she said the follow, “Writing *si ni* [is] handwriting. *Si ninawaambia wa* [I tell them to] copy handwriting *kutoka kwa kitabu vile wameandikiwa* [from the textbook the way they [the authors] have written down. *Tukimaliza kwa kila unit kuna* [At the end of every unit there is] handwriting.” From the teacher’s words, writing and handwriting were synonyms and it was nothing more than copying what was written in the textbook under the section of “handwriting.” When the teacher told me that “writing” and “handwriting” were the



same, this triggered me to ask her, “Who is a good writer?” and she said, “A good writer is one who has a good handwriting and gets all questions correct.” So, according to this teacher, a good writer must have exceptional penmanship, and get all written questions down correctly. If any student in her class was short of this, then that student was not a good writer. Hence, this teacher endeavored to produce students who could write legibly and answer all the questions correctly. It is important to note that handwriting occupied a special place in the English language subject’s national syllabus. It states the following about handwriting,

This is an important area in the development of language. How well children write depends wholly on the kind of training they have received. In this syllabus, handwriting lessons are integrated with the rest of the language lessons, so that learners can practice to write legibly and neatly. (Kenya Institute of Education, 2006, p. 3)

Although the grade one national English syllabus stated that the handwriting activity should be integrated to the rest of the language practices, I did not observe this happening in this grade one classroom. I saw the teacher treat handwriting as a separate entity which just needed to be written in the children’s exercise books as art forms. For example, the children did not read the words written down under “handwriting” section. I attributed this kind of practice as embedded in monologic discourse which only privileges a single voice. In this case the voice of the textbook was privileged over that of the children; the children did not engage with the text’s voice at all. Moreover, this was attributed to the institutional pressure of covering the syllabus. There was great need to cover the syllabus before the academic year ended. This led to sometimes covering what was written in the textbook and not minding to go beyond what was not written in the textbook. Hence, having this kind of monologic instructional pedagogy.

***Drawing.*** Drawing of different items was another practice in this classroom. For example, in the illustration below as was common in this class, reading preceded writing. In this

example, the children and the teacher did reading on telling time before drawing practice took place. Swahili is in italics.

Mrs. Simba: Page 73 *hapo unaambiwa* [you are told to] draw a clock face and show the time. *Hapo unachora* [Here you draw] “clock face” [draws a clock face]. *Hapo unaandika* [Here you write] 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12 [filling the clock face] *Kuonyesha* [to show] half past nine, *unachora ndogo hapo* [you put the small hand here] (at 9) *na kubwa hapa* [and the big hand] at 6. *Ile ndogo inapoint* [the small one points at] time *na ile kubwa inapoint kwa* [and the big one points at] 12. *Nani anaweza kunioshesha* [who will show me] 3 o’clock?

SS: Teacher! Teacher!

Mrs. Simba: Rafiki.

Rafiki: [He goes to show time. He shows 3 o’clock].

Mrs. Simba: Very good. *Nani anaweza kunionyesha* [who can show me] half past five?

SS: Teacher! Teacher!

Mrs. Simba: Chiriku.

Chiriku: [Shows half past five].

Mrs. Simba: Very good. *Nawapa kazi unichoree saa* [I am giving you work, you draw for me a clock]

[Writes on the chalkboard] 1. \_\_\_\_\_ half past nine. *Ile kubwa unaweza kwa* [The big one you put at] six *na ile ndogo kwa nini* [and the small one you put where]?

Mhariri: Nine.

Mrs. Simba: [Writes] 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 5 o’clock. *Kale kadogo kwa* [the small one you put at] 5 *na ile kubwa kwa* [and the big one you put at] 12. *Unachora saa yote unanionyesha* [You will draw a big clock and show me]. Number 3 [writes] 3. \_\_\_\_\_ 3 o’clock. *Haya fanya yote. Fanya kazi* [Okay. Do all. Do the work].

Mambo: *Mwalimu utaandika majina* [teacher will you write the names down]?

Mrs. Simba: *Eeh, wale wanaandika vizuri na wale watapata kila kitu nitawaandika. Hata Biblia inasema kutasemwa majina* [Yes, those who write well and get everything I will write their names down. Also the Bible says names will be read out].

SS: [Some] Number 4 *hujaandika jina* [you have not written any name].

Mrs. Simba. *Hapo ni* [Here is] half past five.

[The students are doing the following assignment from the chalkboard. The instructions are “Draw a clock face and show the time].

1. \_\_\_\_\_ half past nine
2. \_\_\_\_\_ 11 o’clock
3. \_\_\_\_\_ 3 o’clock
4. \_\_\_\_\_ half past five.

[Once the students were done drawing, they took their work to the teacher for grading].  
(Field notes, June, 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010)

In the above interaction, the teacher first went through the exercise with the students by calling on different children to show the times indicated. In this case the teacher tried to engage

the children in their learning. However, because the teacher's objective (in the lesson plan) was for the children to draw clock faces neatly and show the time correctly in their exercise books, not all the children were involved in this answering of questions orally. Also, the physical context brought its constraint; with the many children in the classroom, there was no way every child's voice could be heard, unless the teacher employed collaborative strategies, for example, working in groups. Working in groups could also be a challenge because of the classroom which was crowded with many desks and students; there was no space to rearrange these desks for a group discussion. In fact, when the children left their desks for grading or going out of the classroom, they had to step on top of the desks. Furthermore, with the language policy constraint which emphasized use of English only, I am not sure if a discussion could have been successful. Also, due to the restrictive nature of IRE patterns of interactions which is represented by the above extract, the teacher only evaluated the students' responses by saying "very good" and that was the end of it. Therefore, the interaction remained monologic in nature and there was no authentic dialogue invoked. Due to Mrs. Simba's approach to writing activities (which I saw as "every child for himself"), she told the students to do the exercise individually. The children drew clock faces to show the respective times. Also, the students drew different items to match the words or names of objects. For example, see Tausi's writing below.

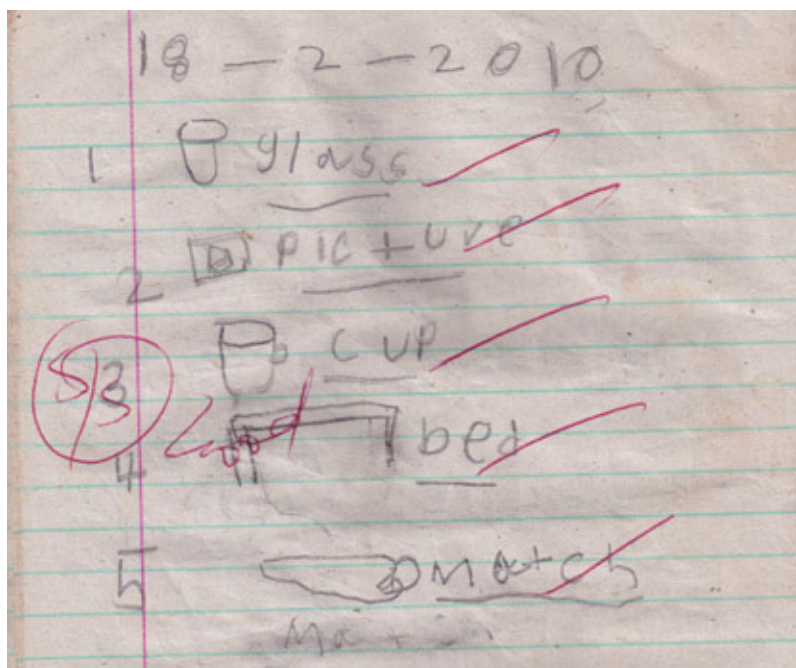


Fig. 6.4 Tausi's Writing

In the above writing Tausi with her classmates drew items and named them. These were household items: a glass, a cup, a match, a bed, and a picture. This is the kind of writing that was dictated by the textbook and was the textbook's voice which is heard. In this kind of writing we do not learn much about the children in this classroom. For example, their daily life experiences, identities, and their imaginations. This was the main challenge for this structured writing. Therefore, there was need to go beyond the textbook's monologic voice and invoke the children's voices in their writing.

**Summary and conclusion.** In sum, the practices which marked the official writing curriculum in this classroom were copying off the board words, phrases, and sentences, and copying paragraphs from the classroom text. There was also filling in of blank spaces, responding to board questions on grammatical elements, dictation work, and drawing to show time or other objects.

Therefore, looking at the values and beliefs that undergird these writing practices and what it means to learn written language in this Kenyan classroom, I assert that official writing was of no independent value in grade one. Children used writing to practice reading and to practice arranging and producing words, phrases, and sentences from the text with the intention of passing the exams and covering the syllabus. Also, I assert that these Kenyan children had no agency in the official English writing curriculum. They just copied words, phrases or sentences from the chalkboard or text. They also got to draw what the text dictated, not what they wanted. The teacher furthermore dictated words for the children; they did not write what they wanted to write. Also, the teacher had no power. She depended on what the class text dictated like a holy script. My assumption was that the teacher did not intend to look for extra teaching materials beyond the textbook, which she was required to use by the school. Her teaching style was therefore dictated by what the school offered. She also depended on the chalk and board a lot, as opposed to teacher-made wall charts, flash cards etc. From a sociocultural and dialogic view, students must connect with language in a meaningful way. It is through talk and dialogues that children learn language in the company of others (Bakhtin, 1981; Dyson, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). The children in this classroom were reprimanded when they talked unless asked to talk by the teacher. This is something that these Kenyan children were denied given the language policy, physical context, and the teacher's understanding of her job to proceed through the text to cover the syllabus.

Finally, writing in this classroom was reduced to handwriting, copying, and spelling. Children did not use print to represent their ideas and to interact with other people. Learning to write was a construction of a product. It did not involve learning to participate in diverse social dialogues. This official curriculum was not open to experiences of the children or to the depth

and the breadth of their language repertoires. The teacher was surprised to see what the children did in their unofficial curriculum (see chapter eight for details on this unofficial curriculum). The reason for these sorts of practices (i.e. copying, handwriting, and spelling) may be partly because of the emphasis on exams in the Kenyan system of education. Everything done in the classroom had to be geared towards performing well in the exam. If knowledge was not to be tested in an exam, then it was not worthy to be covered in class. This is why non-examinable subjects were not taught in this classroom. Furthermore, the copying off the board practice was a common practice because of the shortage of textbooks and other literacy materials.

Moreover, these classroom interactions during copying, filling spaces, dictation, drawing, and handwriting were monologic and authoritative in nature. I state this because during these practices the only voice heard was that of the teacher and the textbook. The teacher followed strictly what was written in the textbook. The teacher's voice was heard as she gave the students different instructions. The students did not engage with whatever they were doing in class. They just imitated what the teacher wrote or said. Due to the authoritative nature of the teacher and the text, I witnessed a transmitted mode of knowledge (Bakhtin, 1986). This kind of transmission of knowledge did not encourage creativity. As Freire (1970) states, "The student records, memorizes and repeats these phrases without perceiving what these statements mean" (p. 71). For instance, the students copied the "handwriting" letters and words without reading them or engaging them in any way. Therefore, there is a need to go beyond recording and memorizing in writing. But, as I argue in this chapter, with constrained physical conditions (i.e. lack of literacy materials and overcrowded classroom), language policy which emphasized use of English only, and a context which emphasized passing exams and covering the syllabus, these practices were at best unavoidable.

Although most of the national educational documents (e.g. the national syllabus) advocated for dialogic learning (e.g. classroom discussions and group work), the documents did not consider the prevailing conditions of every classroom in Kenya and this was the problem. With only a few textbooks and chalkboard being the main teaching aid, this resulted in the teacher writing “handwriting” work and assignments on the chalkboard, which meant that more time was taken up in accomplishing these activities and less in authentic teacher-student interactions. It also limited the amount of homework that could be given per day. In fact, one of the parents (the mother of Chiriku, one of the focal children in this study) complained to me that her daughter Chiriku was not getting enough homework from the school. Therefore, such deprived conditions of the current classroom need to be dealt with to inspire comfortable and favorable learning conditions in order to facilitate dialogic interactions in the classroom. In the next subsection, I will look at the reading curriculum.

### **The Enacted Reading Curriculum**

“A good reader is one who can read fluently and pronounce words correctly.” These words were uttered by the English teacher when I asked her who was a good reader. In this section, I will discuss how within the institutional and physical context, the teacher’s definition of a good reader played a part in this classroom’s reading practices. Reading was the main focus in this classroom. Every activity was geared towards helping students know how to read. Hence, reading overshadowed speaking and writing. To give a basis for the classroom practices during reading lessons, I will examine the three important documents in this classroom. I will first look at one of the teacher’s lesson plan, followed by schemes of work and the class text.

### **Lesson plan.**

Date: 14 – 6 – 2010

Topic: Reading

Objective: Pupils will be able to read sentence structures

REF: Primary English page 70

Other Resources: Pictures in the book

#### **Lesson Development**

##### Teacher's Activity

Guide pupils read sentence structures.

Guide pupils to read the story as groups and individuals.

Teacher to ask questions to test understanding.

##### Pupils' Activity

Pupils to read sentence structures.

Pupils to read the story as class.

Pupils to answer oral questions.

Blackboard Plan [This is what is copied on the board from the text]

1. What time did Wangeci drink tea?

2. When did he bring the milk?

3. What time did Jumba speak to the teacher? (Mrs. Simba's lesson plan, June, 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

In the above lesson plan, the topic was “reading” and the objective was consistent with the topic, that is, “the pupils will be able to read sentence structures.” Also, at the level of the lesson development, the students were to read new words, read sentence structures, answer questions orally and in their exercise books. It is clear that the emphasis in this lesson was on reading just as the topic stated. Students were also to answer questions orally and in their exercise books for the teacher to test understanding. Hence, by the end of the day it was testing understanding but not to acquire reading skills. Next, I will look at the schemes of work to see what was supposed to be covered under the reading lessons.

**Schemes of work.** Looking at the schemes of work, the activities to be covered in terms one and two were as follows:



***Term one.***

- i) Pupils to read the letters of the alphabet
- ii) Pupils to read text
- iii) Pupils to read objects in the classroom
- iv) Pupils to read the words in the text
- v) Pupils to read “this is”, “that is”
- vi) Pupils to read sentences
- vii) Pupils to read plural forms

***Term two.***

- viii) Pupils to read textbook
- ix) Pupils to read individually, in pairs, and groups
- x) Pupils to read words in the flash cards
- xi) Pupils to read text
- xii) Pupils to do exercise
- xiii) Pupils to read the story loudly
- xiv) Pupils to read sentences

When the pupils were to perform the above activities, the teacher was to be a guide in all the activities. Therefore to summarize, it appeared that reading in this class according to the teacher’s schemes of work involved the following practices: reading letters of the alphabet, objects, words, sentences, stories, grammatical elements, and doing exercises. Next, I will look at the class text’s reading lessons from the first page to the last:

**Class text.** The following were the things to be read:

- i) Letters of the alphabet a to z.
- ii) Phrases like good morning, fine, thank you, sorry.
- iii) A dialogue between people, for example, between a teacher and a student, between a buyer and a seller.
- iv) Words like teacher, pupil, girl, cup, book.
- v) Questions and pictures, for example, “what is this?” “This is a book,” “This is a pencil,” “That is a pencil.”
- vi) Plural forms, for instance, house-houses, bed-beds, this is a house-these are houses, that is a house-those are houses, accompanied by pictures.
- vii) Numbers, for example one (banana), two (bananas).
- viii) Paragraphs and stories.
- ix) Exercises.

Looking at the above activities, I summarize that reading according to the class text involved reading the letters of the alphabet, words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, stories, grammatical elements (e.g. plurals), pictures, questions, numbers, and exercises. Having given a synopsis of what was in the three official documents; I now turn to the classroom interactions when reading lessons were on.

**Classroom interactions and reading practices.** It was through examining what transpired in the classroom interactions that I came up with the following practices which took place during reading lessons. These involved the teacher reading from the class text and students repeating after her. She read words, phrases, questions, sentences, paragraphs, and grammatical forms which students chorally repeated after her. In addition during these practices, the

classroom interactions were generally monologic just like during writing practices because of the traditional IRE interaction patterns. Generally, all the reading lessons were conducted through teacher-led recitation in which the teacher used the textbook to transmit knowledge through rote learning, that is, imparting information through recalling. Also, usually it was a whole class teaching activity in which the teacher monitored learning from the front. This was mainly because of the classroom's and school's prevailing conditions. That is, many children which resulted in overcrowding, lack of reading materials, emphasis on exams, and a language policy which emphasized the use of English only in the classroom. Also, what was happening in the classroom was closely connected to what the schemes of work from the Ministry of Education seemed to advocate; it seemed to advocate for a passive child during reading lessons. As I discussed in chapter 4, this document seemed to emphasize memorization in reading where the child recited, listened, answered questions from the teacher or repeated what the teacher said. I will now illustrate how reading by repetition or recitation was done in this classroom followed by unofficial peer- led reading.

***Reciting.*** Due to shortage of textbooks in this classroom, reciting after the teacher or choral reading seemed to be unavoidable. The students repeated words, sentences, and paragraphs after the teacher.

*Reciting words after the teacher.* In the following lesson the class was covering the unit of “Colors and Shapes.” As already mentioned, there were only eleven textbooks which were shared among 89 students. One textbook was therefore, shared among eight or nine students. In the following extract, the teacher was reading words directly from the textbook and the students repeated after her. This was a typical teacher led recitation which employed IRE interaction

pattern. The page was 65 of the class textbook: *New primary English pupils' book one: Stepping in*. Swahili words are in italics.

Mrs. Simba: [Writes on the blackboard “colors and shapes.” The teacher has opened page 65. She is reading the words in the box. These are black, white, brown, blue, green, red, yellow, and orange. She is reading these words randomly and showing the students the colors and the students are repeating after her. She writes the word “black” on the chalkboard and shows the students a black crayon and says] black.

SS: Black.

Mrs. Simba: [Shows black school bag and says] black.

SS: Black.

Mrs. Simba: [Shows black paper bag and says] black.

SS: Black.

Mrs. Simba: [Writes the word “red” on the board and shows a red pen to the students and says] red.

SS: Red.

Mrs. Simba: Red.

SS: Red.

Mrs. Simba: Again.

SS: Red

Mrs. Simba: Can you show me black?

SS: Teacher! Teacher!

Mrs. Simba: Mutua.

Mutua: [Shows black].

Mrs. Simba: Good. [Writes the word “white” on the board and shows a white crayon to the students and says] white.

SS: White.

Mrs. Simba: White.

SS: White.

Mrs. Simba: Again.

SS: White.

Mrs. Simba: Again.

SS: White

Mrs. Simba: Again.

SS: White.

Mrs. Simba: [Shows white crayon and black crayon]. *Nataka unionyeshe* [I want you to show me] white.

SS: Teacher! Teacher!

Mrs. Simba: Chiriku.

Chiriku: [Points at the white crayon].

Mrs. Simba: Very good. *Haya kimya* [be quiet]. [She writes on the chalkboard “Brown” and says] brown.

SS: Brown.

Mrs. Simba: Everybody.

SS: Brown.

Mrs. Simba: [Shows brown crayon and says] brown.  
 SS: Brown.  
 Mrs. Simba: Brown color.  
 SS: Brown color.  
 Mrs. Simba: Brown?  
 SS: Color.  
 Mrs. Simba: [Calls on a child who is staring at the ceiling] King'oo [she colors white and brown on manila paper and says] Martin, *nionyeshe* [show me] white.  
 Martin: [Shows white color].  
 Mrs. Simba: Very good Martin. Kaviti, *nionyeshe* [show me] brown.  
 Kaviti: [Shows brown color].  
 Mrs. Simba: Very good Kaviti. [Some children at the back are talking among themselves and she says] *wale wanasikiliza siku hizi hawaongei, kama* [those who listen nowadays don't talk/make noise, like] Mhariri, Tausi. *Wanapata mia* [they get 100%]. Tausi *alipata mia kwa Social* [got 100% in Social, (i.e. Social Studies and Education)]. Mhariri *alipata* [got] ninety six. The lesson continued in the same way until all the colors listed in the text page were all read. [Field notes, June, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010]

Looking at the above lesson, the teacher read each word from the textbook, wrote it on the chalkboard, displayed the color to the students and read the word and the students repeated what she had said. To test their understanding as she indicated in her lesson plan, she called different students to show different colors. When a student gave a correct answer she responded by saying, “good” or “very good.” Interestingly, the few students called to show the colors got them correct. This was an IRE discourse pattern of interaction which has been labeled a “monologic discourse pattern” (Alexander, 2000), in which teachers take turns at will, decide on what questions to be asked, and for how long, and interject their responses controlling the pace and direction of the lesson. As the above transcript suggests, the teacher in this monologic discourse pattern dominated classroom learning through speaking for a long time and controlling the direction of the reading by asking particular types of questions (Alexander, 2000). Furthermore, during reading lesson it was important that the students listen keenly to the teacher, no talking to each other and no staring around. The teacher praised the students who listened. She said that they scored highly in the exam. This showed the significance of exams in this

classroom's learning. However, this point was challenged by her fellow grade one teacher, Mrs. Swale after I asked her the question, "who is a good listener?" She said:

A good listener, *wajua kusikiza ni* [you know it's] inborn. *Kuna wale hawasikizi lakini huwa wanapata kile unasema, hata kama hawapay* [There are those who don't listen but they get everything you say, even if they don't] pay attention. *Sasa huyu [Rafiki] si lazima asikize lakini atapata. Fanya tu swali pale na uone aangalii utamwuliza swali na apate. So si lazima analisten. Kwa hivyo hii ni* [like Rafiki, is not a must that he listens but he gets everything. Just ask him a question, thinking he is not listening, he will get it. So, is not a must for him to listen. Therefore, it is] inborn. [Interview, July, 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010]

I consider that Mrs. Swale was bringing the idea that children can perform multitasks. Also, she was challenging the idea that a teacher may think a child is not following what the teacher is saying or doing simply because he or she was not looking at the chalkboard or the teacher. She gave a very good example of Rafiki who was not always looking at the teacher or the board but he always knew what was going on. He was always the first to complete the teacher's assignments and scored highly in the exams. In fact, one day Rafiki got in trouble with Mrs. Simba during English lesson because she thought he was not paying attention to what she was saying. He got punished for that. Rafiki did not get in trouble with Mrs. Swale because she knew what kind of a student he was. In addition, I noticed that Rafiki was a child who wanted to be challenged intellectually; he understood what the teacher was teaching immediately and wanted to move on to something else as evidenced by his capability to read, write, and answer his teacher's questions. But as I have shown and I will show in the examples to come, the English teacher made the students repeat over and over what she was saying or reading. This might be mind-numbing for some students like Rafiki. Mrs. Simba also made children recite paragraphs.

*Reciting paragraphs.* In the following episode, the class was reading a text from the class textbook on people's birthdays and different activities which were shown in the pictures. The

teacher was reading from the textbook and the students also were looking at the textbook but only a few students were seeing what was written in the book. Therefore, this necessitated the teacher to write the words on the chalkboard. Moreover, because of the school's English only policy, this forced the teacher to use translation approach for the students to understand the content. This extract further elaborates on the monologic discourse style in this classroom.

Swahili words are in italics.

Mrs. Simba: My name is Kache.

SS: My name is Kache.

Mrs. Simba: I am six years old.

SS: I am six years old.

Mrs. Simba: I was born on thirteenth March.

SS: I was born on thirteenth March.

Mrs. Simba: *Tukisema*, "my name is" *tunamaanisha*? [what is the translation of "my name" in Swahili?]

SS: *Jina lako* [your name].

Mrs. Simba: To plant *ni nini*? [what is to plant]?

SS: [Some] *Kupanda mahindi* [to plant corn][In the picture there were people planting corn and most of the children read the picture].

Mrs. Simba: [Reads] We are planting. Planting *ni kupanda mbegu* [is to plant seeds]. My name is Kache.

SS: My name is Kache.

Mrs. Simba: Again.

SS: My name is Kache.

Mrs. Simba: I am six years old.

SS: I am six years old.

Mrs. Simba: Again.

SS: I am six years old.

Mrs. Simba: I was born on thirteenth March.

SS: I was born on thirteenth March.

Mrs. Simba: Again.

SS: I was born on thirteenth March.

Mrs. Simba: Again.

SS: I was born on thirteenth March.

Mrs. Simba: We are planting.

SS: We are planting.

Mrs. Simba: We are planting.

SS: We are planting.

Mrs. Simba: Again.

SS: We are planting.

Mrs. Simba: *Haya, anza* [okay, begin] my name is Kache.

SS: My name is Kache.

Mrs. Simba: I was born

SS: I was born on thirteenth March.

Mrs. Simba: I was born on thirteenth March.

SS: I was born on thirteenth March.

Mrs. Simba: I was born on thirteenth March.

SS: I was born on thirteenth March.

[The lesson continued in the same way and when the reading was over Mrs. Simba instructed the students to copy so as to read later]. [Field notes, June, 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010]

In the above episode, the teacher read each sentence in the paragraph and the students repeated what their teacher read. After completing reading the four sentences in the paragraph, she read the sentences in the paragraph once more and the students repeated after her. She also tested the students understanding by asking for translations of some sentences in Swahili. She asked them to read on their own but it was hard and she went back to her style of teaching reading, “repeat after me.” This was a monologic teaching style where the teacher dominated the talking by asking the students to repeat what she read. Moreover, the voice of the class text and that of the teacher seemed to be privileged over that of the children because only the teacher’s voice imitating that of the text was heard. The children’s voice was only heard through reciting what the teacher said. The teacher had a voice because she was the one who was directing the pace of the teaching and learning. Although she tried to involve the children through asking them to translate some of the sentences in Swahili, this did not give the children the ownership of this learning because they were only translating what was written in the book. Also, the teacher decided when to ask for translations. Furthermore, the physical context that of a crowded classroom and lack of textbook shaped the approach that the teacher was using, that is, choral recitation. There was no way with one textbook shared among eight students and a crowded classroom that the children could have done individual reading or even group work because they could not see the writings in the book well.



Even with the prevailing classroom conditions, I wondered why the teacher used recitation style of teaching and she responded as follows:

*Ninawaambia ili wajue kutamka maneno na unaona wakati mwingine ninawaacha wananisomea na wakishindwa wakipronounce vibaya, ninarudia tena. Na ni* [I ask them (to repeat) so that they may know how to pronounce the words and sometimes you have seen I let them read for me and when they are unable to read or if they pronounce wrongly, I repeat once more. And, is] through those pronunciations of the teacher, they know how to read.

Hence, this teacher's reason to ask the students to repeat after her was for the students to learn how to pronounce different words and sentences. Her approach was rote learning and she believed that knowing how to read was by imitating the teacher. However, as I have argued in chapter four under schemes of work and as I will discuss later in this chapter, from a sociocultural and dialogic view, languages are not learned this way. Moreover, this teacher remained faithful to what was written in the textbook without applying the concepts to the children's lives and their daily experiences. For example, their names, their birthdays, what they do at home etc. The children did not relate to what they were reading to their daily lives. From a sociocultural and dialogic view, it is important to connect classroom learning with the students' experiences at school and at home.

Another issue which came up in the above classroom episode was the issue of shortage of textbooks. Under normal circumstances, the students could have gone home with the texts to read; however, they had to copy in their exercise books. One textbook as already noted was shared among eight or more students in class. Therefore, many children did not see what was written on those textbooks or read what was written. When it came to copying from the textbooks, some ended up copying from the other students who might have had mistakes as well. Since this was a major problem, I asked the teacher how she thought the problem of textbooks could be alleviated and she said, "I'm persuading the able parents to buy for their own children.

*Na sasa hawataki, wakinunua wanawacha nyumbani* [And when they buy they are leaving them at home]”. So, the problem still persisted because the parents who had bought their children textbooks, they were not letting the children bring them to school. It defeated the purpose of buying them in the first place. However, I did not stop there; I raised the same question with the school Principal during my interview with her. My dialogue with the Principal on this issue and also class congestion follows:

Esther (E): I have realized there are very many students in standard (grade) one and the room is very small and there is also a great shortage of textbooks especially in English, Social Studies and I am yet to see a mathematics text. My question is, what measures is the administration taking to ensure this problem is reduced because it is very hard to teach without enough textbooks.

Principal (P): It is very hard and more especially in third term because by third term we expect those pupils to read by themselves. When free education came in schools, they (that is the government) told the parents, they are buying books for their children, they are paying for the watchman, they are paying for the school cooks, and they are even doing renovations; so the parents relaxed. And like this time, they sent very few coins for the textbooks and we had to give priority to this one subject which changed. The syllabus changed, that was Social Studies, it (the government) could not even buy a complete set of textbooks for the class. So, I only had to buy a pupil’s copy and a teacher’s copy so that learning may continue. Then we talked with the parents, we showed them the facts. The teacher has to organize which child is to buy this, to buy that. But, you find still there is a lot of friction because the parents have relaxed and they sit there and say, “The government has bought books.” Again there are other parents who don’t care whether the child learns or not. So, to him or her, telling him to buy a textbook to his child, he doesn’t care, he doesn’t even look at the work the child has been doing in school. So, you find that there is that problem.

E: Ok.

P: So we sit and wait for any other funds, we check on the class which has demand and we buy.

E: So what will you do with the room problem? Those children in standard one are very many!

P: Another problem which came with the free education, it’s like now, I should accept every child. No matter, if there is room or not, but the child has the right to learn. They (parents) don’t mind how they are congested. Last term we had another class, standard six which was more congested than standard one.

E: Sure? [I didn’t imagine any other class had more children than grade one!]

P: Yes, and by January we constructed that room, the last room there [points at one of the classrooms], we split the two classes. I called the parents for a meeting. I told them the situation, they accepted and they, we said we had to construct that room. We took two months to put that class up. So, for standard one, I know I’m now missing very many

rooms, we were thinking of having a *harambee* [a funds drive], we put up more classrooms. (Interview, June, 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

So, through this interview, I got to know that by third term the children were expected to know how to read. This explains why there was a lot of emphasis on knowing how to read in this classroom. In addition, the shortage of textbooks and large classes was blamed on free education by the government. The government did not send enough textbooks and also construct classes and do renovations as it had promised. Change of syllabus was also blamed for the shortage of textbooks. If a subject's national syllabus changes in Kenya, this calls for different textbooks and the textbooks which had been bought before the syllabus changed are no longer useful. This was waste of resources. The Principal also stated that the classroom teacher had to liaise with the parents to know which child was to buy which textbook; however, as we have learned from the English teacher, this was not working because the few parents who had bought the textbooks did not let their children bring those books to school. I did not see any personal textbooks in the classroom. Furthermore, the Principal acknowledged that the parents were reluctant to buy textbooks because they knew the government was buying textbooks. In this blaming game the victims of these circumstances were the classroom teacher and the students. This was why the teacher ended up copying almost everything on the board for the students to read or copy. And the students ended up copying almost everything in the exercise books to read later. In addition, the teacher read every single word and sentence from the textbook and the students recited after her. Therefore, this shows how a physical and a social context shaped what literacy practices took place in this classroom, that is, copying and recitation practices due to shortage of literacy materials. In the next section, I will examine the classroom interactions while the students were repeating sentences read by the teacher.

*Reciting sentences.* In this lesson, the class was reading page 65 of the class text. The unit is still on “Colors and Shapes.” The teacher had opened page 65 and so were the children. I use this extract to illustrate even though the children were reading from the textbook; it did not make any difference in the approach which the teacher used in instructing. It was still teacher –led recitation which elicited choral reading. I also analyzed it as a monologic instructional style.

Mrs. Simba: What color is this hen?  
SS: What color is this hen?  
Mrs. Simba: What color is this hen?  
SS: What color is this hen?  
Mrs. Simba: What color is this hen?  
SS: What color is this hen?  
Mrs. Simba: What color is this hen?  
SS: What color is this hen?  
Mrs. Simba: What color is this hen?  
SS: What color is this hen?  
Mrs. Simba: This hen is black. [Reads each word separately] This- hen- is- black.  
SS: This-hen-is-black.  
Mrs. Simba: Again.  
SS: This-hen-is-black.  
Mrs. Simba: Again.  
SS: This-hen-is-black.  
Mrs. Simba: Again.  
SS: This-hen-is-black.  
Mrs. Simba: Again.  
SS: This-hen-is-black.  
Mrs. Simba: What-color-are-those-bags?  
SS: What-color-are-those-bags?  
Mrs. Simba: [Asks for students’ school bags] *Unauliza ukiwa mbali* [ask at a distance]:  
“What colors are those bags?”  
[Two girls at the back of the class are pushing each other and smiling. They are not reading. The lesson continued in the same manner]. [Field notes June, 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010]

Looking at the above extract, even if the children had opened the page to be read, with only a few textbooks to be shared among 89 students only a few students were able to read what was written in the textbooks. Therefore, most of the children did not see what was written down and more so did not see how a word was written down. So, even if in the future they came across that word it would be a challenge to read it because they had not seen it. Also, from the extract it

was manifested that the teacher taught reading by repeating just as she did in the previous excerpts. The teacher made students repeat sentences after her. The students were expected to memorize all those words in the sentences so that next the time they come across them they would be able to remember them. This idea was well illustrated by what the teacher told me at the end of that lesson, “*watoto wa lower ni kushika hapa* [points at the head]. *Hawajui kusoma*. [Lower grades’ children have to put it here [points at the head]. They don’t know how to read.]” This implied that because the lower grades’ children did not know how to read they had to memorize by repeating after the teacher. She also repeated the same readings many times or on different days. She justified this by telling me one day, “*Mwalimu tunarudia, ni lazima kurudiarudia ndio waelewe* [Teacher, (the teachers called me “teacher”) we are repeating, it is a must that we repeat for the children to understand].”

Mrs. Simba believed learning of English language is by repetition and imitation, that is, rote learning, but as I have stated languages are not learned this way. This was a behavioristic approach in language learning (Skinner, 1957, cited in Hoff, 2005). This behaviorist approach was further extended by the teacher rewarding children by writing their names down in her book when they individually read to her. If they did not read they were “punished” by their names not being written down. In the following extract the teacher varied repeating style. The class was covering the months of the year, this portion came after the students were done repeating after the teacher as a whole class and the students also attempted to read as a group [in rows] by the teacher pointing different sentences on the board. In this extract towards the end we see Rafiki acting as a capable peer and trying to help Kasuku learn how to read. Swahili is in italics.

Mrs. Simba: [Points to one of the rows] This row *anza* [start] from January to July.

SS: [Read from the chalkboard where the teacher has copied statements on the first seven months of the year]:

January, the first month of the year.

February, the second month of the year.  
 March, the third month of the year.  
 April, the four month of the year.  
 May, the fifth month of the year.  
 Mrs. Simba: Fifth  
 SS: [They repeated fifth five times after the teacher] Fifth  
 Mrs. Simba: *Endelea* [continue].  
 SS: June, the sixth month of the year.  
 Mrs. Simba: Sixth.  
 SS: [Repeated sixth five times] sixth.  
 Mrs. Simba: [Points at the next row]: This row. *Anza* [Start from] January to July.  
 SS: [They read from January to July. Fadhili belongs to this group and he does not read any single word, he is poking his desk and opening a Swahili exercise book and not looking at the chalkboard. Another child is sleeping].  
 Mrs. Simba: *Nani atanisomea ndwaa mpaka mwisho* [who will read for me continuously to the end]?  
 Rafiki, Chiriku, Malaika, Paulo, and Akilimali: [Raise their hands].  
 Mrs. Simba: Tausi, *huwezi* [you can't]?  
 Tausi: [Nods] "yes."  
 Mrs. Simba: *Hao ndio tu wanaweza? Mhariri huwezi?* [These are the only ones who can? Mhariri you can't?]  
 Mhariri: [Nods] "yes".  
 Mrs. Simba: *Someni* [read].  
 Rafiki, Chiriku, Malaika, Paulo, Akilimali, Tausi, and Mhariri: [read from the board, January to July statements].  
 Mrs. Simba: *Mwandike sasa* [write now].  
 SS: [Copy from the chalkboard the seven sentences].  
 Mrs. Simba: *Ukimaliza jifundishe kusoma. Na uandike na good handwriting. Ukiandika good handwriting nitakuandika kwenye kitabu. Kama unaandika vibaya nitakuandikia very poor [when you are done teach yourself how to read. And write in a good handwriting. If you write in a good handwriting, I will write your name in the book. If you write poorly I will write for you very poor].*  
 SS: [Those who completed writing went to read to the teacher. Those who read their names were written in the teacher's book; those who did not read were not written. Rafiki was helping Kasuku know how to read. He read from January to July statements and she repeated after him. Once done Kasuku suggested they repeat the reading. This repetition does not seem to help her. After the second reading, Rafiki told Kasuku, "*Enda usome uandikwe*" [go and read your name to be written down]. Rafiki read and his name was written in the teacher's book. However, Kasuku was not able to read to the teacher. Her name was not written in the teacher's book]. [Field notes on June, 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010]

From the above extract, it is clear that the students as a whole class read by repeating what the teacher said or read. This repeating was done many times. The teacher sometimes asked the students to read as a group [in rows] and sometimes individually. When they read

individually and successfully, they were rewarded by being written in the teacher's book. The teacher also valued good handwriting. Those who had good handwriting their names were written in the teacher's book while those who did not have good handwriting, their exercise books had a comment of "very poor." Although the teacher talked of good handwriting, I did not see her take time to show the children what good handwriting looked like. She also told the children to teach themselves how to read once they were done with copying the statements off the board. It was incomprehensible how the children would teach themselves because most of the time they depended on repeating after the teacher. She had never given them other strategies for reading. Kasuku asked Rafiki for help and Rafiki used the teacher's approach of "read after me" (i.e. recitation). This did not help Kasuku in improving her reading skills. The teacher's approach of repeating and memorizing did not help Kasuku. Assistance in reading through collaboration of peers was common in this classroom just as Rafiki helped Kasuku read in the above extract. I elaborate on this practice below.

***Unofficial assistance in reading from capable peers.*** Learning through the help of peers was a valued practice not only during English lessons but also during other lessons like Swahili, Math, Science, Christian Religious and Education, and Social Education and Ethics. In fact, there was an emic term in the whole school for a capable peer- "teacher-pupil." In the following extract, the interaction was between capable peers and other students during reading lesson. It is important to note that in this example the peer reading was initiated by the students themselves. The interaction took place during remedial time. The teacher had told the children to read page 66. The language of communication between the children was Swahili while the language of the text was English. Swahili is in italics.

Muendi: *Chiriku kuja unisomeshe* [Chiriku come and teach me (i.e. how to read)].  
Chiriku: [Reads for Muendi and she repeats after her from page 66 of the class text. She

read sentence after sentence and Muendi repeated. She “taught” her the whole page by reading sentence by sentence and Muendi repeating after her. Sometimes Chiriku repeated words which Muendi did not pronounce well].

[When they were done reading, Rafiki and Mutua joined, Chiriku continued teaching her peers. She read every sentence and they repeated each sentence after her. Rafiki knew how to read; I guess he just wanted the company of his peers]. (June, 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

Looking at the above extract, Muendi called Chiriku to teach her how to read. However, with repeating words and sentences, it was a real challenge for Muendi to know how to read. The memorization did not help Muendi to know how to read. By the end of the term/semester, Muendi still did not know how to read. Moreover, in the following group, the three children in the group did not know how to read but, because the teacher had instructed the children to read, they had to improvise ways to read.

The children in this group were Mbula, Kasuku, and Soni. They were reading page 66.

They read as follows: This is a book.

This is a *kiti* [chair].

This is a pencil.

This is a ruler.

[This is not what is written in the reading. The text read as follows:

What color is that book?

That book is blue.

What color is it?

It is blue.

What color are your chairs?

Our chairs are brown.

What color are they?

They are brown.

What color is this pencil?

This pencil is blue.

What color is it?

It is blue.

What color is this ruler?

This ruler is red.

What color is it?

It is red.

They are reading pictures and beginning the sentences with “this is”]. In the first paragraph, there was a picture of a book, in the second paragraph, there were pictures of chairs which they read in Swahili as “*kiti*” (chair). In the third paragraph there was a picture of a pencil, and in the last paragraph, there was a picture of a ruler].



Akilimali: [He was seated next to this group and he just joined the group, he read as they repeated after him the whole page]. [June, 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010]

Looking at the first part of the extract, the children read the pictures and started the sentences by “This is” followed by the name of the object in the picture. In the second part of the extract, a capable peer (i.e. Akilimali) comes in and began reading and they repeated. Akilimali knew how to read and he noticed that his peers needed his help which he gave whole heartedly. Akilimali guided his peers in reading just as his teacher did-through repetition. However, one may memorize just a few words but many sentences like the ones which were on that page may be impossible. In fact, I consider genuine participation in reading took place when Mbula, Kasuku, and Soni read the pictures and started their sentences with “This is,” at least they knew what they were reading and they had some agency in their reading. When they imitated Akilimali, they did not “own” that reading but Akilimali did. Listening was another practice which was emphasized by the teacher in this classroom.

***Listening as the teacher taught reading.*** As I have already mentioned, listening was expected from every child as the teacher was reading. There were rewards associated with listening to the teacher. In the following excerpt some children were talking to each other as the teacher was expecting each child to repeat what she read. Swahili is in italics.

Mrs. Simba: [Told the students] *Tulisema kupita mtihani, kwanza, ni kusikiliza mwalimu. Sio kuandika au kusoma. Kwanza unaandika hapa* [points to the head. Meaning you take note in your brain]. *Halafu kwa kitabu. Watu kama Akilimali walikuwa wanasikiliza mwalimu alipata kila kitu* [we said to pass the exam, first, you listen to the teacher. It is not to write or to read. First, you write here [points to the head. Meaning you take note in your brain]. Then, in your book. Some people like Akilimali, they were listening and they got everything]. (Field notes June, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010)

From this teacher’s point of view, in order to pass the exam every child must first listen to the teacher in the hope they will memorize what the teacher taught them. However, I noted in this class that the children were to listen to the teacher for a long time and they were never given

a genuine opportunity to put into practice what they had learned through this listening. They also had no play time except the lunch break and the snack break and during these times they were expected not to be noisy, but at least they could talk in low voices. Also, every effort was geared towards passing exams. The children were supposed to listen to the teacher so as to memorize everything and come the exam time they would spew on the paper what they had memorized from the teacher. This rote learning approach did not portray children as agents in their own learning but the teacher and textbook owned the learning. In the following example the children who had not scored 265 points out of 500 were hit for not passing the exam.

[It is at 9:45 am on Monday morning and the children have just come from the morning assembly. During the assembly the position of every student in the school had been mentioned. Mrs. Simba and Mrs. Swale enter the classroom].

Mrs. Simba: *Wale wamepita ni mpaka* [The pass mark is] 265. [She called the names of those who had failed, that is, 264 and below. Some students had not done all the subjects and they were informed. Those who had less than 265 (about 30 students) were called in front of the classroom. Some students had hidden their exam papers like Kaviti and therefore, their papers were not graded either. The children were hit 4 or 5 strokes on their buttocks. All of them cried].

Mrs. Simba: [As she hit them she said] *Unasikiliza mwalimu, unaandika kwa kichwa halafu kwa kitabu sio kwa kitabu halafu kwa kichwa* [You listen to the teacher, you write in your head, then, in your book not in your book then in your head. [She called the names of the students who had gotten 400 and above and said] *Hao lazima tuwape zawadi saa nane* [we must give them gifts at 2:00 o'clock] and she exited the classroom. (Fieldnotes, June, 2010)

In the above episode, every child who failed the exam according to Mrs. Simba was because they were not listening to the teacher, and they were punished for that. However, this generalization was not true for all children. I knew some children who listened to the teacher but their exam performance was not meeting Mrs. Simba's expectations. This teacher's strategy of teaching through rote learning did not seem to equip her students with the necessary tools for language and literacy development as was exemplified by the number of students who did not meet her benchmark (265 points). But the teacher's way of teaching by rote learning did not

totally rest on her. This teacher was a product of the Kenyan education system; she owed her way of teaching to documents like the schemes of work from the Ministry of Education which emphasized memorization and repetition. Memorizing and listening did not seem to help all the children. Although other curriculum documents such as the national syllabus emphasized a child-centered learning (e.g. collaborative learning), these documents as already discussed do not consider the realities of every classroom. The realities of this classroom include that of congestion, big numbers of students, lack of textbooks and other reading materials, and a language policy which does not acknowledge use of mother tongues. With all these prevailing conditions, teacher-led whole class instruction and rote learning prevailed.

Moreover, I consider that this teacher, just as did the capable peers in this classroom, learned how to teach through “apprenticeship by observation” (i.e. by socialization) (Ackers & Hardman, 2001). This is a practice in which through experiences of being taught for many hours as a student, “a teacher to be” internalizes a certain model of teaching. In this case the teaching model seemed to be that of teacher dominated instruction which promoted rote learning. This socialization factor has been cited as having a great influence in the Kenyan primary schools teaching (Ackers & Hardman, 2001; Pontefract & Hardman, 2005; Sifuna, 1997). Therefore, given this cultural influence, it is not surprising that this English teacher seemed to draw these teaching practices from her teachers as well, just as we have seen from the capable peers in this classroom. The capable peers were borrowing the same recitation modes to tutor their peers how to read. Therefore, this cycle seems to continue from one generation to another (Ackers & Hardman, 2001; Pontefract & Hardman, 2005; Sifuna, 1997). I will end this section on reading practices by drawing attention to one of the vignettes involving the English teacher and me. (Swahili is in italics).

One day, Mrs. Simba [English teacher] came in the classroom immediately after the Swahili teacher and found the following Swahili syllables and words on the chalkboard:  
ya ye yi yo yu

Yaya yai wayo uyoga

She looked at them and came at the back where I was seated and told me:

Mrs. Simba: *Kiswahili wanafunzwa* words and sounds. In English you teach words in sentence structures. You put words in sentences *ili wajue* meanings in a sentence.

*Hatufunzi* sounds. *Kuna kitabu kingine cha* sounds *lakini sina*. *Hata huwezi ukaona hizo*

sounds *kwa* textbook. They read *maneno* through recognition. Finally, *mtoto anajua*

*kuandika*. *Anajifunza kwanza kwa kujaza pengo*. They learn through recognition. [In

Swahili they (i.e. students) are taught words and sounds. In English you teach words in

sentence structures. You put words in sentences for them to get meanings in a sentence.

We don't teach sounds. There is another textbook of sounds but I don't have. You cannot see those sounds in our class textbook. They read words through recognition. Finally, the child knows how to write. First, the student learns by filling in blanks. They learn through recognition].

Esther: *Na kama hufunzi* sounds, *wanafanya nini wakicome* across new words? [If you don't teach sounds, what do they do when they come across new words?]

Mrs. Simba: *Unafunza* [You teach] through pronunciation. *Hicho kitabu hakina* [that

book (the class textbook) doesn't have] sounds. *Ni mwalimu anajua* [It is the teacher who

knows] diphthongs. *Si unajua* [you know] diphthongs? *Hakuna* [No] syllables *kwa* [in

the] textbook. *Ni mwalimu anajua* [It is the teacher who knows]. *Kiswahili kina* [Swahili

textbook has] syllables. *Kwanza unaeleza* [First, you explain] meaning *ya* [of a] word *na*

*unaiweka kwa* [and then you put it in a] sentence structure. They are told through actions.

The vocabulary is the same in the story and in the questions and in the handwriting. The

same words are repeated throughout so that the child may recognize and know meaning,

how to pronounce and through recognition and as shown in the picture, for example, he

jumps. Through real life situations and pictures show too. [Field notes, June, 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010]

Earlier Mrs. Simba had told me, “*Unafundisha* [you teach] through recognition. No spelling. Spelling is part of cramming” [Field notes, June, 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010].

Looking at the English teacher's words, she seemed to use her class text as an authority; because the text did not have sounds, then she did not teach sounds. In addition, the teacher did not consult any other textbook to help the children learn the sounds because she strictly followed what was provided by the school. She mentioned that she made use of life situations and pictures but as a matter of fact this was a rare thing in this classroom. The pictures in the textbook were never mentioned and rarely connected learning with the children's daily experiences. The

children read sentences from the book only and that was the end of it. I interpreted this as having been shaped by the schemes of work from the Ministry of Education (a curriculum document) which emphasized that the children should for instance, “read a text on the months of the year”. However, it did not make any room for the children to connect the knowledge of the months of the year with their daily experiences. So, with Mrs. Simba who strictly followed what was written down, it was not surprising that she did only what was written in the book.

Moreover, the teacher stressed “learning by recognition” or “teaching through recognition.” The teacher’s guide which she was using states that the word recognition approach has two methods:

A. “The look-and-say method.” The teaching procedure under this method is as follows:

1. Oral revision of the word.
2. Presentation of the written word.
3. Repetition by the pupils.
4. Practice in recognizing the word (p. vi).

The activities for the children included word matching, word-picture matching, using matching cards, etc.

B. “The phonic method” whose teaching procedure is:

1. Oral revision of the word.
2. Write the known words on the chalkboard and let the pupils read them.
3. Rub out parts of known words not needed in the new word. Get the pupils to read what you leave on the chalkboard.
4. Bring the remaining letters together to form the new word, for example, get the pupils to blend the sounds and read the new word (p. vii).

Activities for the children include using phonic slides, that is, pupils move strips to make different words. They should read them out. Also, they should use sound cards/flashcards for word building.

From the teacher's guide, for the children to recognize words and be able to read words they needed the two methods, that is, "look and say" and "phonic". The two methods should complement each other. However, the English teacher chose to ignore the phonic method altogether in helping children learn how to read. She categorically stated, "No spelling. Spelling is part of cramming." Therefore, cramming was not supported by this teacher, yet this was what she did when she told the children, "repeat" or "again." She advocated for rote learning through her teaching style. Still, from a sociocultural and dialogic view, language learning is not accomplished only by using the two methods, but language is learned in social interactions through the mediation of an expert like a teacher in meaningful events.

Furthermore, Mrs. Simba's generalization that, "in English you teach words in sentence structures. .... *Hatufunzi* [we don't teach] sounds" was challenged by another lower grade English teacher in the same school. I asked her, "How do you teach reading in English?" She said, "I start with letters or vowels, followed by syllables, sounds, then whole words, and then sentences. We also use flash cards and charts." This teacher who was an English teacher in lower primary looked at sounds as well. Therefore, Mrs. Simba's generalization that in English there was no covering of sounds was not a real reflection of what happened in the lower primary classes in this school. This teacher also used charts and flashcards in her teaching. However, in Mrs. Simba's class, this was a rare thing. Since, examinations seemed to influence what was to be read in this classroom, I now turn to a discussion on the nature of examinations in this classroom.

**Examinations.** Kalimani primary school was an examination-driven school like many schools in Kenya. Kenyan education is based on high stakes testing. Examinations are the only sorting machines from one grade to another. As a matter of fact, thousands of Kenyan students

are sorted yearly through an examination which constructs many students as dropouts and only a few are designated to join higher educational institutions.

The students at Kalimani did examinations at the end of every month and the end of every term (i.e. semester). The teacher whose exam mean score for his or her subject was 60% and above was rewarded with some money during morning assemblies. Also, the class whose overall mean grade was the highest in the school was rewarded. In addition, the students who were positioned 1-3 were rewarded with candy. Therefore, teachers worked hard to ensure that their students performed well in the examinations. The students who performed below the pass mark (which was 265 out of 400) were punished by being hit on their hands or buttocks.

It is important to note that the teachers did not set these examinations for their students but they were bought from examination printers. In the following extract, I questioned the school principal why they bought examinations instead of the teachers setting the questions and sending them for printing and she said the following:

That one can work. But then, you will find that this teacher will set only the part that she has taught in class or covered in class. That would work in terms one and two. But in term three, you need to have completed the syllabus. You have to set everything which should be covered according to the syllabus. And you know the teachers are very fun. They can set very simple questions according to how they have taught, so you may think that the pupils are learning but they are not. So, the teacher will keep on setting whatever she has taught every end month and term. Sometimes, that teacher may be behind the syllabus, she might have relaxed and known that, "I'm the one to set the exam. I will set what I have taught and what I know my pupils can answer." So, that is one of the things that discouraged us from the teachers setting their own exams. Other times, we used to set and exchange exams; you are a teacher in class one and I'm a teacher in class two, I set my exam, you set yours, but you are not the one to grade your exam, we grade for each other. So, after I set my exam, I will teach in advance what I have set. (Interview, June, 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

According to the principal it is through the examinations that the system can measure the performance of the teachers, in terms of who has completed the syllabus or not. The desire to cover the syllabus was great among all the teachers in this school. This is why some of the

teachers taught beyond the regular hours of school so as to cover the syllabus. Also, examinations seemed to be an accountability tool on the part of the teachers. If a teacher's subject was failed then that teacher was not working hard enough and this explains why the teachers whose subjects' mean grade was 60% and above received monetary value. Furthermore, I asked the principal the following question on evaluating performance of grade one pupils.

Esther: How do you gauge the performance of standard one children?

Principal: It is only through the exams, we gauge through exams. There is no any other way you can gauge performance. After covering the syllabus or a topic you see whether they have understood and then you can judge the kind of pupils you have. (Interview, June, 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

The principal in the above excerpt put it straight that there is no other way to determine the students' performance except through testing. Therefore, because the English teacher knew her performance and that of the students was assessed through exams, this explains the kind of interactions which were in the English classroom. The teacher drilled the students in an effort to make sure that when the same elements came in the examinations the students would be able to produce them from memory. This kind of exam drilling promoted rote learning. Moreover, as it can be seen from the examination paper below, fig. 6.5 and fig. 6.6 (which was end of June, 2010 exam), oral skills were not tested and therefore, the teacher did not put much emphasis on speaking but reading and structured writing which would help the students in answering exam questions like the ones in this exam.



# STANDARD ONE TERM - II - 2010

## ENGLISH

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ SCHOOL: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Dictation

1. boy
2. man
3. desk
4. nose
5. leg

### Fill in the missing letters

6. P \_\_\_\_\_ nc \_\_\_\_\_ l
7. Y \_\_\_\_\_ ll \_\_\_\_\_ w
8. W \_\_\_\_\_ nd \_\_\_\_\_ w
9. B \_\_\_\_\_ k

### One

bag

10. ball

11. Box

12. \_\_\_\_\_ chairs

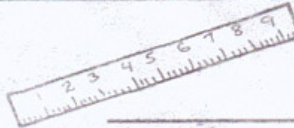
13. \_\_\_\_\_ knives

### Name these pictures

- 14.



- 15.



- 16.



{book, desk, duster, bag, ruler}

Write in symbols or words

17. Eight - \_\_\_\_\_
18. 4 - \_\_\_\_\_
19. Three - \_\_\_\_\_

### Write the opposites

e.g go - come

20. Shut - \_\_\_\_\_
21. Out - \_\_\_\_\_

22. Young - \_\_\_\_\_

{old, in, stand, open, new}

Add -ing e.g read - reading

23. Sing - \_\_\_\_\_
24. Run - \_\_\_\_\_
25. Stand - \_\_\_\_\_
26. Clap - \_\_\_\_\_

### Name the shapes

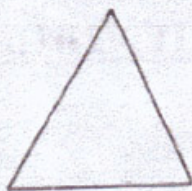
- 27.



Fig. 6.5 June exam, page 1



28.



29.



{rectangle, oval, triangle, circle, square}

Write the missing letters

30. I \_\_\_\_\_ L, M \_\_\_\_\_ P

31. T \_\_\_\_\_ V \_\_\_\_\_ Y \_\_\_\_\_

32. p, q \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, u

33. \_\_\_\_\_ c, d, e \_\_\_\_\_ h

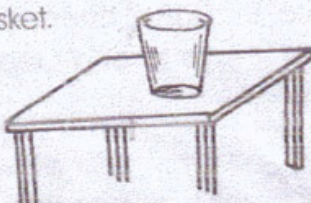
Use 'in' 'on' 'under' or 'between'

34.



The potatoes are \_\_\_\_\_ the basket.

35.



The glass is \_\_\_\_\_ the table.

36.



The ball is \_\_\_\_\_ the trees.

37.



The pencil is \_\_\_\_\_ the chair.

Use 'is' or 'are'

38. This \_\_\_\_\_ a dog.

39. These \_\_\_\_\_ chairs.

40. This \_\_\_\_\_ a door.

41. Those \_\_\_\_\_ bottles.

Fill in the missing words

42. I have \_\_\_\_\_ fingers.

{two, five, ten, six}

43. I am in standard \_\_\_\_\_

44. My name is \_\_\_\_\_

Use 'a' or 'an'

45. This is \_\_\_\_\_ egg.

46. \_\_\_\_\_ axe.

47. She is \_\_\_\_\_ girl.

48. \_\_\_\_\_ pencil.

49. I have a bag and \_\_\_\_\_ orange

50. \_\_\_\_\_ arrow.

Fig. 6.6 June exam, page 2

Therefore, in addition, to the influence that language policy, physical, and social contexts had on the English language teaching, examinations had an important effect on English instruction as well. Teaching was guided by what the exams tested. In fact, sometimes the teacher used past examination papers for reviewing purposes in preparation for the end of the month and term examinations. Since examination questions required remembering of the correct answers and generally did not require understanding of basic principles, these examinations seemed not to provide the teacher with an adequate incentive for teaching the students the understanding of what they were learning. In addition, grammar examination questions may further have reduced the likelihood that instruction would include detailed explanations of important concepts. For instance, the exam above which the students did at the end of June, 2010, shows the nature of this examination which is a representation of all the English examinations in this classroom.

In summary this examination tested students' knowledge of spelling through dictating the words: boy, man, desk, nose, leg. It also tested alphabetical knowledge in the form of filling in missing letters. In addition, it tested naming of different pictures and shapes: a book, a spoon, a leaf, a bag, a chair. Finally, it tested grammar: plurals, prepositions, past tense, and present continuous tense. Hence, it appears most of the questions required the students to rely on memory.

Consequently, it appears that the English teacher's instruction was driven by the kind of questions which were tested in the examinations. Therefore, she usually drilled her students on grammatical elements in preparation for these kinds of examinations. I looked at past examinations which were done in grade one and the format was the same over the years (see appendices J-L).

**Summary and conclusion.** In summary, the practices which took place during reading were the teacher reading words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs from the textbook which most of the times she wrote on the chalkboard and told the students to repeat after her. This repeating usually was the whole class repeating or sometimes smaller groups or individuals called on to repeat. Sometimes, the teacher called students to read and usually most of them were not able to read. Less than seven students out of 89 displayed evidence of knowing how to read. This low number of readers in this classroom suggests that literacy and language learning through imitation and repeating was tedious and did not work in this classroom. Hence, from sociocultural and dialogic perspectives, children learn languages by interacting with other people and appropriating the other people's voices (Bakhtin, 1981; Dyson, 2003; Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). As I have shown, these children were not given the opportunity to interact with each other and talk or interact with their teacher in a meaningful way to practice language and other skills. During the reading lesson, the students were supposed to listen carefully and quietly. Talking to each other was punishable. These kinds of practices have the characteristics of "banking education" (Freire, 1970) where, "the student records, memorizes, and repeats phrases" (p. 72). This is exactly, what the English teacher did in her classroom as shown, trying to keep up with her definition of a "good reader" which opened this reading section. These were monologic interactions where knowledge was transmitted through classroom recitation. "Teachers talk and students listen" (Nystrand, 1997, p. 3). This kind of teaching lacked creativity because the students listened and the teacher talked, the teacher knew all and the students knew nothing. This English teacher confessed many times that, "Standard one students know nothing, they do not know how to read and how to write," yet she did not give them the opportunity to talk or write freely. I therefore, conclude these children did not have any agency in their learning. The

contexts which seemed to shape the teacher's pedagogical methods were the physical (many children, crowded classroom, lack of literacy materials), social (e.g. socialization over the years), language policy (English only), and some curriculum documents (which emphasized rote learning and exams). With lack of literacy materials like picture books and class textbooks, individual reading was not possible. Also, with a language policy which advocated for English only, and with curriculum (i.e. schemes of work from the Ministry of education) which seemed to emphasize passive learning, (i.e. the children were to repeat and memorize what the teacher said or read), then the teacher seemed to fall back to recitation reading. In the next subsection, I discuss the enacted official speaking curriculum.

### **The Enacted Speaking Curriculum**

I will first examine two documents (i.e. schemes of work and lesson plan) just as I have done in the previous sections. The classroom textbook did not have any section on oral or speaking lessons. It was no surprise then to see that speaking was not given any seriousness by the teacher in this class because she depended on the textbook to dictate what was to be learned in the classroom. I will therefore, examine schemes of work and one lesson plan to lay a foundation for speaking interactions in this classroom.

**Schemes of work.** The schemes of work had the following activities which were to be covered by the students.

#### ***Term 1.***

- i) Pupils to recite and read the letters of the alphabet
- ii) Pupils to exchange greetings in pairs
- iii) Pupils to listen to the teacher
- iv) Pupils to construct sentences
- v) Pupils to count 1-100
- vi) Pupils to name parts of the body

#### ***Term 2.***

- i) Pupils to construct sentences
- ii) Pupils to repeat questions and answers

- iii) Pupils to read
- iv) Pupils to listen to the teacher (From Mrs. Simba's Schemes of Work, 2010)

Looking at the schemes of work then speaking in this classroom was marked by reciting, reading, listening, naming, constructing sentences, and repeating questions and answers. I now turn to one of the lesson plans on oral work.

### **Lesson plan.**

Date: 11 – 6 – 2010

Topic: Oral work

Objective: Pupil will be able to read sentence structures.

REF: Primary English page 70

Other Resources: Pictures in the book.

#### **Lesson Development**

##### Teacher's Activity

Guide pupils to read new words

Guide pupils read sentence structures

Guide pupils answer oral questions

Guide pupils to answer questions in their exercise books

##### Pupils' Activity

Pupils to read new words

Pupils to read sentence structures

Pupils to answer questions

Pupils to answer questions in their exercise books

#### **Blackboard Plan [These words were to be written on the chalkboard]**

- Wake up

- Tired

- O'clock

- Clock face (Mrs. Simba's lesson plan, June, 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

Looking at the above lesson plan, although the teacher had given this lesson the topic, “oral work”, her objective was for the students to be able to read sentence structures. Therefore, reading seems to be the focus here. Looking at the lesson development part, the students were to read new words, read sentence structures, answer questions orally and in their exercise books. Hence, the focus on reading was emphasized along with the answering of questions. It seems that this teacher's emphasis was on knowing how to read and answering questions, while speaking as a skill in language communication was ignored. This was typical of her oral work lesson plans.

As I will show in the classroom interactions discussion, the students did not talk to each other in the form of dialogues or discussions during the lessons. Therefore, it seems from this teacher's point of view that, "if you read it, you speak it." Hence, the effort in reading. It is important to note that the students were not tested orally and anything which was not tested was not taken seriously in this class. For example, subjects like Mother tongue, Creative Arts, and Physical Education were not examined and their time was allocated to examinable subjects like English, Swahili, and Math. I now turn to the classroom interactions during oral lessons.

**Classroom interactions and oral practices.** During a speaking lesson (which was not common as most of the time was spent on perfecting reading and handwriting) the children repeated what the teacher said or answered oral questions. It was hard for me to know when it was a speaking lesson without the help of the teacher's lesson plan because its interaction structure resembled that of a reading lesson.

The following extract illustrates how the teacher asked questions on opposite words from a past exam paper. She first gave translation of opposite as "*kinyume*" in Swahili. The answers were given by the whole class or some of the children who knew the answer or just a single child who knew the answer. I use this extract to show that although these children's learning was shaped by their circumstances; they had something to say about their learning. Though it was a typical IRE interaction pattern, the children's voices were heard loud and clear without the usual imitation of the teacher's voice and that of the textbook. The teacher did not call any names out; the students volunteered information. Swahili is in italics.

Mrs. Simba: Opposite *ya* woman *ni nini* [What is the opposite of woman]?

Akilimali: [Shouts] man.

Mrs. Simba: Very good. Father?

SS: Mother.

Mrs. Simba: Very good. Brother?

Mambo: Sister.

Mrs. Simba: Sister. Son?

Mua: Daughter.

Mrs. Simba: Very good, daughter.

Kambi: *Mwalimu Mbithe anaongea* [Teacher, Mbithe is talking].

Mrs. Simba: [Says nothing to Kambi or Mbithe] son?

SS: [Shouts] daughter.

Mrs. Simba: Cold [gave translation in Swahili] *baridi*.

Kelitu: Sun.

Mrs. Simba: Hot. Come?

Mhariri: Go

[The lesson continued and towards the end, the teacher asked the children if those questions came in the exam if they will get everything correct. They all said, a big “yes.” She also wrote all those words and their opposites on the chalkboard and asked the children to read them loudly and to copy them in their books]. [Field notes, July, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010]

Looking at the above extract, it was clear that these children rose to the challenge because they were given the opportunity to answer those questions without the teacher giving them the answers and asking them to repeat after her. This was a good example for the teacher to see these children knew something; students knew information. Also, it was clear that the reason why the teacher did this was for the purpose of passing exams. It was not an authentic learning experience for the children. It was also a very abstract way of learning language; what they dealt with was not connected to their daily experiences. Also, the nature of the IRE interaction pattern did not allow the teacher to open up the questions. That is, the questions only required a single response. And of course, it was overwhelmingly predominantly teacher-directed learning. The reason behind these kinds of practices boiled down to the teacher’s definition of who was a good speaker of English and the institutional and physical contexts. She stated that, “A good speaker is one who has a good articulation of words.” Therefore, her efforts were geared towards good articulation of words. It was not surprising that she did not include children’s experiences in her teaching so long as the children produced words correctly. Also, this emphasis on good articulation of words was born out of the fact that English was a second language in the



classroom. The teacher could not have emphasized articulation if English was a mother tongue to the children because by the time children join school they are already familiar with the sound system of their first languages. In addition, the institutional context that of language policy which privileged English at the detriment of mother tongue, and exam oriented learning/teaching shaped the kind of teaching/learning in this classroom. Learning in this classroom was marked by drills hence rote learning. Furthermore, the physical conditions, such as crowded classroom with no literacy materials and other resources with only the chalkboard as the main teaching aid, led to no discussions in the classroom and copying off the board.

To conclude this section, I invite the teacher herself to tell us about how she taught English speaking through my dialogue with her. Swahili is in italics.

Esther: How do you teach speaking lessons in English subject?

Mrs. Simba: Speaking lessons in English! [Looked surprised]. Pupils, pupils participate in reading sentence structures, making sentence structures, but in class one, they cannot make. You are making them to recognize the words. So in class two, they will be able to make sentences, you make sentences for them, then, they repeat *na unawaeleza hiyo* [and you explain to them the] meaning. (Interview, June, 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010)

Mrs. Simba was surprised because she did not expect such a question from me. She said students participated in class, and as I have already discussed, by participation she meant repeating her words and listening to her. Speaking also included reading sentences and recognizing words. She said she constructed sentences for the children in grade one, and they repeated after her because they could not make their own sentences. However, during my observations there was no time that Mrs. Simba told the children to construct sentences to confirm that they could not make sentences. She held this opinion that the children knew nothing. As we shall see under the “unofficial curriculum” in chapter 8 (Dyson, 1993) these children knew a lot but the teacher did not give them the opportunity to showcase what they

knew. However, as I have discussed, the institutional, social, and physical contexts shaped teaching and learning in this classroom.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

In this chapter, I not only gave “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973) but also tried to provide “thick explanation” (Lewis & Watson-Gegeo, 2004). “Thick description, in Geertz’s classic account, refers to incorporating participants’ interpretations of behavior and events (their emic perspectives) into the analysis, as well as relevant cultural information” (Lewis & Watson-Gegeo, 2004, p. 8). A thick explanation “takes into account all relevant and theoretically salient micro- and macrocontextual influences that stand in a systematic relationship to the behavior or events that one is trying to explain” (Watson-Gegeo, 1992, p. 54). The English classroom interactions were influenced and shaped by the social, physical, and ideological contexts, including the social and physical contexts which were presented by a crowded classroom with 89 children, use of English as a language of instruction even though it was a second language, lack of literacy materials, and an ideological context which favored English and devalued mother tongues like Kamba. Further contextual factors were an education system which aimed at passing examinations and not acquiring knowledge for its sake, and classroom interactions and practices which privileged the voice of the textbook, the examination, and the teacher. These classroom interactions were monologic. They were controlled by the teacher in the form of the three exchange pattern of interaction, that is, IRE. The teacher asked questions, students answered, and teacher evaluated if it was right or wrong. I consider the English teacher as a case of these social and ideological contexts. These contexts forced her and her students to do certain things in the classroom. For instance, the lack of literacy materials forced her to copy almost everything on the board. Because English was foreign to the children in the classroom she was forced

sometimes to code-switch to Swahili but not Kamba because Kamba was banned in the school compound. She never used Kamba in her instruction. Kamba resurfaced one or two times when she was punishing the children, just in the form of a sentence.

In conclusion of this chapter of official English language learning, I want to argue in this chapter just like Bakhtin (Morson & Emerson, 1990) that “because of mental habits, intellectual traditions, and centripetal cultural forces” (p. 56) dialogic qualities of the practices or events were lost in this particular classroom. In fact, the socialization of the teacher first as the student and later on as a teacher seemed to have contributed as well to how the English teacher taught. I believe she followed her teachers’ footprints just as the capable peers followed her footprints in helping their peers read. They did reading by recitation, that is, “repeat what I read.” Hence, monologic interactions were the order of the day. I want to further argue that monologic or “transmissions models of communication” (Wertch, 1991, p. 79) inhibit students’ creative power and thus agency in their language and literacy development. Dialogue is important for meaning to be constructed. Moreover, meaning comes into existence only when two or more voices (i.e. the teacher’s, the textbook’s, and students’) come into contact- “When the voice of a listener responds to the voice of a speaker” (Wertsch, 1991, p. 52) and the speaker recognizes the listener’s voice. In the next chapter, I will show how the Swahili teacher was able to recognize her students’ voices and hence there were dialogues in the Swahili classroom.

## **Chapter 7**

### **The Official Swahili Literacy Practices**

In analyzing the data in this chapter, I draw from a sociocultural and dialogic framework which maintains that social interactions and cultural institutions such as classrooms have important roles to play in a child's literacy and language development. Thus, the social life of the classroom is central to the issue of a child's literacy and language learning. In this chapter, I assume that through the teacher's mediation as she interacted with the children, learning took place in this particular classroom. Also, as the teacher and the students interacted they were involved in different practices or genres and this is what marked the culture of this classroom. I will therefore, discuss how learning took place by analyzing the different practices which occurred in this classroom, focusing on how social interactions played a part in the children's literacy and language learning. I will first discuss the reading curriculum, followed by the oral curriculum, and finally, the writing curriculum.

#### **The Enacted Reading Curriculum**

The official reading practice was done every day in class. The teacher usually began each lesson by either telling the children to open a particular page where the reading came from or writing the syllables or words to be read on the chalkboard. After writing on the board she instructed the students to read in unison the written words or syllables. Alternatively, she told the children to read the words, sentences or text from the textbook. In addition, she also called individual students to read the words or the text. The availability of space and reading materials played a major role during reading. This was because one textbook had to be shared by two or three students and this meant not every child could see everything written or the pictures drawn in the textbook. Also, I did not see any story book in Swahili. Mrs. Swale sometimes tried to get

reading papers for the children. These papers had different words and sentences written in them. Furthermore, because of the shortage of reading materials like textbooks and lack of class readers and many students, the teacher could not always avoid choral reading. Even with these challenges she varied her teaching style by calling on various individual students to read and give illustrations. She also called different groups to read separately.

In this chapter, I will illustrate how the official reading curriculum was enacted by the teacher and the students. I will provide field notes' examples to elaborate on how Mrs. Swale went beyond choral reading in socializing her students into reading practice. Thus, I saw Mrs. Swale go beyond recitation and rote reading in her teaching to a dialogic reading which involved participation of the students in the classroom. The two themes which I will elaborate are: from recitation to a dialogue and from a novice to an expert. These themes were born out of sociocultural views (Dyson, 2003; Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991) and dialogic views (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). In this Kenyan classroom, first, I assumed mediation involved interaction between an expert/the teacher and a novice/the student in which the teacher eventually transmitted literacy skills to the student through social interactions. Secondly, mediation involved interactions between student and other students, and student and text as well.

In addition, dialogic theory brings in the concept of dialogue and that all human discourse is a complex of dialogic interactions (Morson & Emerson, 1990). Dialogue therefore allows voices of the "other" to emerge. I assumed that the teacher and the students were involved in dialogue with each other. In the extract below the classroom was reading a text from the textbook. I use this extract to show how official reading curriculum was enacted in this classroom. The teacher involved the students' voices by asking them different questions relating

to the time when they did different activities throughout the day. The language of communication and that of the text was Swahili in this classroom during Swahili lesson.

Mrs. Swale: The page is ninety five. [She writes on the chalkboard] 95. Why did your parent woke you up early this morning?

Saulo: So as to come to school.

Mrs. Swale: So as to come to school. What time did you come to school?

SS: [Some] In the morning.

SS: [Others] Early.

SS: [Others] At seven o'clock.

Katulu: [She said in English] Morning.

Titu: [Said in Swahili] *Asubuhi* [Morning].

Mrs. Swale: Very good. You come to school in the morning. What was there in the morning?

Rafiki: Darkness.

Elisha: [Said in English] Sun.

Mrs. Swale: I want you to tell me in Swahili.

Rafiki: [Gave translation of sun in Swahili] *jua*.

Mrs. Swale: The sun was rising. Which side?

SS: That [pointing to the eastern side of the classroom].

Mrs. Swale: That side [pointing at the same direction as the children]. Fadhili, there are people talking.

Lina: Those [points to Fadhili and Mutinda].

Mrs. Swale: Fadhili and Mutinda are you the ones talking? What time is it?

SS: [Some] Half past ten.

SS: [Others] Eleven o'clock. [The time was 12.00 noon].

Mrs. Swale: It is midday. We are almost eating lunch. What time do we come from school?

SS: Evening.

Mrs. Swale: What time do you sleep?

Muendi: At night.

Rafiki: I sleep at seven.

Mambo: I sleep with the chickens [This is a saying which means sleeping at 6:00 pm when the chickens go back to their pens to sleep].

[The class went through the reading in the textbook with the teacher bringing to the students' attention pronunciation and denoting of various words. In the reading the boy in the text had woken up early, went to school, ate lunch and in the evening he went back home and the teacher had the following question]:

Mrs. Swale: I want to ask a question. What time do you go to sleep?

SS: [Raise their hands].

Mrs. Swale: Titu.

Titu: At seven.

Mrs. Swale: [Calls the following children to say when they go to sleep]:

Soni: I sleep at eight.

Knight: I sleep at nine.

Tatu: I sleep at ten.

Kasuku: I sleep at nine.

Elisha: I sleep at the same time as Titu.

Rafiki: I sleep at seven.

Mrs. Swale: I know some of you don't read [meaning at night]. Others eat in their sleep [meaning by dinner time some of them are asleep because they sleep early].

[The reading and the discussion continued]. [Field notes, June, 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010]

In the above extract, the teacher tells the students to open the page of the day. She introduced the reading by asking the children why they were awakened early by their parents. One of the students by the name Saulo says they were awakened early so as to come to school. The teacher agrees with Saulo's answer by repeating what he said. Her first question is followed by the second one where she asked them what time they came to school. Individual students gave the times they came to school as in the morning, early, and seven o'clock. The teacher agrees with all these answers by saying, "Very good." Next, she asked the students what was there that morning. Rafiki said there was darkness while Katulu said there was sun in English, meaning it was sunny. The teacher asked for Swahili translation of the word sun. Titu gave the translation of the word sun as "jua" in Swahili. The teacher repeated the students' answer that the sun was rising which was followed by her next question of where the sun was rising from. All the students responded to the teacher by pointing to the eastern side of the classroom. She confirmed their response by pointing at the same direction as the children. Next, she commented that there were some children talking. The culprits were Fadhili and Mutinda who were pointed by Lina. Their names were called out which was followed by the next question of what time it was then. The exact time was 12:00 noon. It was interesting that the children just said the time without looking at the time. There was no clock in the classroom neither did they have watches. Some said half past ten and others eleven o'clock. The teacher told them the time was midday and it was almost time to eat lunch. Next, she asked them what time they went back home from school.

They all answered in unison that they went home in the evening. The teacher then asked them what time they slept. Rafiki said he slept at seven while Mambo said he “slept with the chickens.” This is a saying which means sleeping at 6:00 o’clock. In this community almost in every home they keep chickens and usually the chickens are left to wander everywhere in the homestead and by 6:00 o’clock it gets dark and the chickens cannot see in the dark and therefore, this tells the chickens it is time to get back home. They go in their pens at 6:00 pm to sleep. Mambo seems to understand this saying and the other children as well. This is because no one laughed when Mambo said that he slept with the chickens. Neither was I surprised by this, because I knew what it meant. The teacher then took the students back to the text and when they were done reading she asked them once more when they went to sleep. I realized Rafiki was consistent with his time of sleep which he stated once more it was seven o’clock. Also, it seems the children were attentive to each other’s response, Elisha said that she slept at the same time as Titu.

Therefore, in this episode the teacher was mediating her students’ reading by asking them questions which corresponded with the reading. Through this interaction the teacher and the children were constructing meaning. Wertsch (1991) addressing meaning following a dialogic view stated that, “Meaning can come into existence only when two or more voices come into contact: when the voice of a listener responds to the voice of the speaker” (p. 52). In the above dialogue, the teacher’s and students’ voices came into contact and thus created meaning. The students responded to the teacher’s voice when she asked questions. The teacher as well took into account the students’ voices by repeating or acknowledging the students’ responses.

Although there was no room for free movement in the classroom and also shortage of textbooks and other reading materials in the whole school, this did not deter this teacher from



involving her students actively in their reading as we have seen through asking them questions and integrating their answers in the discussion by repeating their answers or saying, “very good.” Thus, the teacher and her students were involved in a dialogue where the students’ voices were heard as they answered the teacher’s questions. The students also paid attention to each other’s responses. Listening to each other was important for this dialogue to succeed. The teacher also listened to the students and this is how they constructed their meaning together as I have already stated. Hence, through the above episode, the official reading curriculum was enacted through the teacher asking the students questions as they read the text. Finally, the teacher as the expert of reading was introducing her students who were the novices to the practice of reading. With time and practice, according to the sociocultural theory, the novice internalizes that knowledge acquired through interacting and participating in different activities with an expert and in the company of peers (Dyson, 1993; Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). Vygotsky (1978) states, “Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological)” (p. 57). The interpsychological plane or the social dimension shows that learning (in our case reading) first took place between a student (a novice) and the teacher (an expert). This dependent or interpsychological nature of learning develops to something more independent or intrapsychological at a later stage. For example, as children in this classroom learned how to read they depended on the teacher in early stages of reading development. As they were socialized into reading practice, they developed gradually and became less dependent on the teacher and actually some of these children were capable of reading on their own. Therefore, the reading development occurred as the novice readers and their teacher engaged in dialogic interactions in which the teacher guided the children to

accomplish the reading task at hand. Through these regular social and dialogic interactions over time, some children then internalized the reading skill and practice.

Hence, in the following episode I illustrate how some students had become capable peers after participating in the reading practice for quite some time under the guidance of the teacher and they had become experts in reading in their own way as well. In the episode, as they did in many reading activities, these children helped their fellow peers in reading. The capable children were reading each word or sentence and their peers repeated after them. In this school, a peer who helped the rest of the students academically was called a “teacher-pupil” meaning a “more capable peer” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). A capable peer assists his or her peers in carrying out different activities or collaborates with them in performing different tasks, for example, reading in our case. In this episode the teacher had given some students some papers which had some words and sentences written. The rest of the students were using the Swahili textbook. Rafiki was one of the teacher-pupils who were using these written papers. This paper had only words and there were no pictures. Unlike the class textbook that had pictures accompanying each reading. Each group had four children. This reading took place during remedial time.

Rafiki: [Reads] *askari* [a soldier].

Group: [Each child has the written paper on his/her desk] *Askari*.

Rafiki: *Chaki* [chalk].

Group: *Chaki*

Rafiki: *Jani* [a leaf].

Group: *Jani*.

Rafiki: *Bendera* [a flag].

Group: *Bendera*.

Rafiki: *Nyumba* [a house].

Group: *Nyumba*.

Rafiki: *Dada anapiga ngoma* [The sister is playing drums].

Group: *Dada anapiga ngoma*.

Rafiki: *Huu ni ugali* [This is cornmeal].

Group: *Huu ni ugali*.

Rafiki: *Mwana mtukutu* [A naught child].

Group: *Mwana mtukutu*.

Rafiki: *Hiki ni kijiko* [This is a spoon].

Group: *Hiki ni kijiko*.

Rafiki: *Nanasi linaliwa* [The pineapple is being eaten].

Group: *Nanasi linaliwa*.

Akilimali was leading another group. They were using the classroom text which had pictures accompanying each text. They were reading texts done in class on the previous three days. Just like Rafiki, Akilimali read and the group repeated after him.

Akilimali: *Sasa ni asubuhi* [It is in the morning].

Group: [One textbook is shared between two students] *Sasa ni asubuhi*.

Akilimali: *Jua limechomoza* [The sun is rising].

Group: *Jua limechomoza*.

Akilimali: *Mwanafunzi anaenda shule* [The student is going to school].

Group: *Mwanafunzi anaenda shule*.

Akilimali: *Amebeba mkoba wa vitabu* [He is carrying a schoolbag]. [The reading continued].

[Once the groups were done reading, each student went to read to the teacher. Some were able to read the assigned readings but others were not able to read everything. After the students were done reading to the teacher, she gave them a dictation based on the readings. [Field notes, July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010]

In both groups, the teacher-pupil read either the single word or a sentence and the rest of the students repeated after him. Each word or a sentence was read once by the teacher-pupil and the group repeated once as well. After the reading the students went to read to the teacher. At least every student attempted to read to the teacher and later on they got a dictation from the teacher based on their reading. So, these children had been socialized into the practice of reading, which involved reading single words or sentences. Also, Rafiki and Akilimali are more capable peers who had learned how to read through dialogic interactions with their teacher and other students and were practicing what they knew, that is, reading. They no longer needed help from the teacher because they knew how to read. Hence, they were operating at intrapsychological level. The rest of the students who read and were not able to read everything they were still

operating at the interpsychological level and they still needed help of the teacher (expert) and that of more capable peers.

In the next subsection, I will provide two more examples when the classroom was enacting the official oral curriculum. In these examples, students' play and storytelling which are products of social interactions and dialogue are promoted in this classroom. These two events had a participation structure in which the students took a center stage in their learning.

### **The Enacted Oral Curriculum**

In the following episode the class is covering an event which involved solving riddles. In this event the students selected their fellow peers to resolve their riddles. This was a language play. In other words, the children were playing with riddles in which every child wanted to play the game of solving riddles. It was like solving a mental puzzle where every child wanted to play. Vygotsky (1978) states that, "In play a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself" (p. 102). During this riddle time every child raised their hands wanting to give a response or to give a riddle. It was play time, only this time the teacher was present. These riddles were said and answered in Swahili. The language of instruction and communication was Swahili as well.

Mrs. Swale: I would like you to read what I will write on the board. [She writes]

*Vitendawili* [Riddles]. Who will read this for me?

SS: Teacher, teacher, teacher.

Mrs. Swale: Akilimali.

Akilimali: *Vitendawili*.

Mrs. Swale: All of us.

SS: *Vitendawili*.

Mrs. Swale: Who will give us a riddle?

Titu: [Raises his hand].

Mrs. Swale: Titu.

Titu: *Kitendawili* [a riddle]? [This is beginning of riddles].

SS: *Tega* [I have got it]! [This is a response to the beginning of a riddle].

Titu: My house doesn't have a door.

Rafiki: An egg.

Titu: Correct.

Mrs. Swale: Who else will give us a riddle? Saulo?

Saulo: *Kitendawili!*

SS: *Tega!*

Saulo: My hen lays its eggs on thorns.

Chiriku: A pineapple.

Saulo: Correct.

Mrs. Swale: I would like us to write those [She writes on the board]:

1. *Nyumba yangu haina mlango- yai.* [Asks] Who knows an egg?

SS: [All raise their hands].

Mrs. Swale: Where does an egg come from?

SS: [Shouts randomly] from the hen, from the turkey, from a bird.

Mrs. Swale: [There was an eagle on the tree by the window] The one outside is called?

SS: [Some say in Kamba] **masuni** [a big bird].

[Others say still in Kamba] **Kasuni** [a small bird].

Mrs. Swale: This bird is called *kunguru* [an eagle].

SS: *Kunguru.*

Mrs. Swale: Even this one lays eggs. Let us read as we follow the pointer. Okey.

SS: *Nyu- mba ya- ngu ha- ina m- la- ngo- ya- i* [they read each syllable alone. Tausi is not reading but sucking her thumb].

Mrs. Swale: Tausi I want to see you read.

Tausi: [She stops sucking her thumb].

Mrs. Swale: The second riddle [She writes]:

2. *Kuku wangu hutagia mibani- nanasi.*

SS: [Read] *ku- ku wa- ngu hu- ta- gi- a mi- ba- ni- na- na- si.*

[Some read *ya- ngu* instead of *wa- ngu*].

Mrs. Swale: Kila mtu w-a, wa.

SS: Wa.

[The lesson continued with the students asking each other riddles and the teacher writing them down which were later copied in the children's exercise books. The teacher also asked the students some riddles for them to answer. [Field notes, June, 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010]

In the above episode, the children told each other riddles and they gave the responses as well. The teacher wrote them on the board and the students later copied the riddles in their exercise books. The children played with the riddles and they were the main players in this game. The teacher valued the students' contribution to this body of knowledge by writing on the board what the children said.

Riddles have been used in the Kenyan culture for a long time even before the onset of the colonialists. In the evening the children and the community in general challenged each other by saying riddles to be solved. Thiong'o (1986) a Kenyan writer states:

We learnt to value words for their meaning and nuances. Language was not just a string of words. It had a suggestive power well beyond the immediate and lexical meaning. Our appreciation of the suggestive magical power of language was reinforced by the games we played with words through riddles, proverbs, transpositions of syllables, or through nonsensical but musically arranged words. The language, through images and symbols, gave us a view of the world, but it had a beauty of its own. (p. 11)

Thiong'o states that language is not just a string of words but has meaning and helps its users construct a world view. These children in this classroom had firsthand information through riddles that language is not just a string of words but helped them construct meaning and have a view of the world around them. Riddles challenged their imagination. These children had to think hard in order to solve them. They had to form images in their minds in order to solve the riddles. For example, "My house doesn't have a door!" they had to form an image of something which does not have a door, yet it is a house! A rock does not have a door and it is not a house for any one. I bet it had to be an egg of something. This kind of an exercise challenged and boosted the children's imagination. Imaginary play was a means for learning language (Genishi & Dyson, 2009). Through this familiar and shared experience of folk knowledge, the children were not following any script but they were experiencing and playing with language and in the process they learned language and also practiced how to read and write. Therefore, through the riddles play, the classroom's dialogue was extended through what Nystrand (1997) called "dialogic instruction" (p. 15) where a teacher made space for her students' voices.

In addition, this kind of a lesson broke the school-home discontinuity because riddles play is very common in the rural setting of the Kenya communities where the young are challenged by the old in form of riddles or even the young challenge each other with riddles. The

riddles are told either in Swahili or other Kenyan mother tongues. Moreover, during riddles' play, the children used Kamba when they gave the name of the bird by the window as "masuni" or "kasuni." Even though the children did not know the name of the bird outside in Swahili, they knew it in Kamba. In this case Kamba acted as a resource in learning for these children. They did not keep quiet when the teacher asked the question. They knew its name - "masuni" or "kasuni." This is in line with second language learning theories which state that first languages are a resource to second language learning (Cummins, 2005; Hudelson, 1986; Samway, 2006). Hence, Kamba was a learning resource for these children even though the school administration had banned Kamba use in the school. Therefore, this Kenyan cultural resource of riddles played a part in the learning of Swahili in this classroom. These riddles mediated the language learning and the children had something that could challenge their imagination. Furthermore, the children took the center stage in their learning. They gave the riddles, they answered and they also determined if the answers were correct or not. Finally, the riddles brought the voice of the community in the classroom.

Another aspect which promoted learning in this classroom was the role given to children's stories by the teacher. It did not matter whether it was time for reading or writing; the teacher was keen to the children's stories and was ready to intervene in whatever circumstance. In the following episode the children had just completed copying some words off the board and some children had run to the bathroom.

Chiriku: [Comes running so fast from the bathroom and tells Mrs. Swale in a loud voice and wide open eyes] *kuna mtoto ametuambia kuna dudu kubwa msalani imeshika kisu kubwa na iko na meno kubwa na makucha* [there is a child who has just told us that in the bathroom there is a big *dudu* [monster] holding a big knife and has big teeth and nails.]  
 Mrs. Swale: *Ni mtoto gani amewaambia* [Which child has told you?]  
 Chiriku & Fadhili: Tausi.  
 Mrs. Swale: *Hebu niitie* [call for me] Tausi.  
 SS: Tausi, Tausi, Tausi, *unaitwa* [you are being called].

Tausi: [Comes to Mrs. Swale and says]: Lina *ndio ametuambia* [is the one who has told us].  
 Mrs. Swale: Lina *kuja* [come].  
 Lina: [Comes].  
 Mrs. Swale: *Uliona nini* [what did you see]?  
 Lina: [Surprised] *Mtu mkubwa akiwa na meno makubwa* [A huge person with huge teeth]!  
 Mrs. Swale: *Mtu mkubwa na meno makubwa* [A huge person with huge teeth]?  
 Lina: [Nods, yes].  
 Mrs. Swale: *Wapi* [where]?  
 Lina: *Hapo nje* [There, outside].  
 Mrs. Swale: *Huko kwa njia* [On the road]?  
 Lina: *Eee* [yes].  
 Mrs. Swale: *Mbona hakuwa msalani, ni mtu alikuwa anapita. Ee* [So he wasn't in the bathroom, he was passing by. Is that true?]  
 Lina: [Nods, yes].  
 Mrs. Swale: *Waambie ni mpita njia. Waambia* [Tell them it is a passerby. Tell them].  
 Lina: [Quiet].  
 Mrs. Swale: [To the children] *Lina anasema aliona mtu mwenye meno makubwa kwa njia. Si msalani na alipita akaenda zake. Kwa hivyo hakuna mtu msalani* [Lina is saying that she saw a person with huge teeth on the road. It is not in the bathroom and he went his own way]. [Field notes, June, 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010]

In the above dialogue Mrs. Swale listened to the children's story. She assured them all was fine and that the huge person with big teeth was seen on the road and he went his own way. Mrs. Swale did not rush to tell the children to keep quiet as her colleague –Mrs. Simba did most of the times. Mrs. Simba silenced the children without caring what they had to say. In fact, Mrs. Simba came to the classroom immediately after Mrs. Swale and the children were still talking about this “dudu” and she said, “Nonsense, there is nothing like that, keep quiet.” All went dead. Her voice silenced the children's voices just like when teacher Paley (1986) announced her point of view and communication came to a stop because her voice drowned out that of the children in her classroom (Paley, 1986).

Surprisingly, this was what Mrs. Simba did in her teaching. Paley's words made a lot of sense to me when I sat in the English classroom. Also, I remember when I was in elementary school in rural Kenya like these children, there was once a story of a man who put on a skirt and



was out to kidnap children. I did not have such a teacher like Mrs. Swale who could have assured me all was fine. I had a teacher like Mrs. Simba who did not listen to the children's stories. Hence, encouraging of such stories in this classroom helped the teacher know the children's fears. Dyson and Genishi (2009) addressing the role of storytelling stated that by telling stories children construct the self and that of the other through language. So, storytelling gave these children an opportunity to practice their language and reflect on their world view.

### **The Enacted Writing Curriculum**

Another aspect which Mrs. Swale allowed in her classroom was that the children could have a "classroom talk" as she called it as they did their writing activities. Writing activities in this classroom included copying words off the board and the textbook, doing grammar exercises, drawing, coloring, naming, dictation, completing words and sentences, handwriting, etc. In the following episode, some children are done copying riddles from the chalkboard and others are still copying. Some who are done copying like Rafiki, make themselves busy by doing their own writing, that is, drawing or talking in a low voice. This was made possible by having a teacher who could allow some classroom talk as long as the children did not disturb the rest of the class. The Swahili teacher most of the times told me it was important to have classroom talk and this is how she got the "dudu" story. The following excerpt illustrates Rafiki's agency with his peers in this classroom. When the following episode took place, the teacher was at the back looking at the students' work. The teacher did not know this kind of activity took place. It was the children's own efforts as I will discuss in chapter 8 under the unofficial curriculum. However, I discuss this episode in support of Mrs. Swale's acknowledgement of classroom talk and show how this acknowledgement supported children's agency in their writing development and language learning in general.

Rafiki: [Sees a dove by the door and says so lovingly in a low voice in Kamba] **Kavuli, kavuli** [little dove, little dove].

Amani [Rafiki's deskmate sings in low voice]: *Kavuli tii tii ti, Kavuli tii tii ti.*

Titu: [Who is also seated close to Rafiki sings in a low voice to Rafiki] Winner, winner, Jesus you are a winner, winner, battle you have won for ever, winner.

Rafiki: [Smiles in appreciation of Titu's song]. He sees some space in his Swahili exercise book and begins drawing quietly when all of a sudden Amani begins the following Swahili song and Titu and Rafiki join in as well but Rafiki kept on drawing.

*Mtoto ni mtoto* [A child is a child]

*Mawe ni mawe* [Stones are stones]

*Tuliona wengi* [We have seen many]

*Mtoto ni mtoto* [A child is a child]

*Shikamoo, Marahaba* [Shikamoo, Marahaba, is a greeting of honor among the Swahili people, the child greets an elder "shikamoo" and the elder responds "Marahaba"].

Kambua: [A very reserved girl who is seated next to the three children stands up and shakes her body vigorously enjoying the song as she takes her book for grading].

Mhariri: [Also stands up and shakes her body as well].

[Some children laugh and say]: *Anajifunza dance* [She is learning how to dance].

The following is what Rafiki drew:



Fig 7.1 Rafiki's Drawing

He told me the following about his drawing:

*Gari linaenda Mombasa* [points at the vehicle]. *Imebeba watu. Na dudu* [points at the other figure] *inataka kuingia iwaume* [The vehicle is going to Mombasa [points at the vehicle]. It is carrying people. And the monster wants to get in and bite them]. [June, 28, 2010]

In the above episode, the children sang, drew, talked, and danced because of a teacher who allowed classroom talk as I have mentioned. Through the children's talk, different identities resurfaced- that of Kamba speakers for example, Rafiki called a dove as "*Kavuli*" in Kamba language and Amani sang the Kamba song of "*Kavuli tii tii ti.*" The identity of English

speakers/learners was revealed through the song *Jesus you are a winner* and that of the children as Christians as well. This song which Titu sang was a very popular song in the churches in this community. Also, Titu was a son of a church minister. Therefore, his identities resurfaced through this song. In addition, the children sang the Swahili song *Mtoto ni mtoto* which was one of popular Swahili songs played in the radio. Hence, their identities as Swahili speaker/learners and radio listeners are exposed. To crown it all, Rafiki brought to life the *dudu* story through his drawing and story. This story and drawing came two weeks after the *dudu* story. Rafiki revoiced or recontextualized (Dyson, 2003) the *dudu* story. This *dudu* story which his teacher had allowed in the classroom was the raw material of his own story. Hence, the *dudu* story mediated his writing.

This episode thus, illustrated the agency of these children in their language learning. They were able to make use of many resources which were at their disposal. They sang, drew, danced, told stories, and used Kamba (whenever they did not know a word in Swahili or simply sang in Kamba). These resources supported their language learning. They made their language learning experience make sense to them by using these familiar resources. These singing, talking, drawing, telling stories, and dancing nourished their relationships with each other as well. These activities made the children laugh with each other, smile, and talk to each other.

Hence, from a sociocultural and dialogic view, for these children, meaning was built by drawing, singing, dancing, and talking; they used these media to construct mental and social models of their experience, to make the world they live in sensible (Gallas, 1994; Genishi & Fassler, 1999). For instance, Rafiki's drawn story was a construction of his imagination and experience as a child in this particular classroom where there was once a story about a monster (*dudu*). These children's play and other media, which were exposed in this language classroom,

were powerful means for thinking and learning language. Hence, these children learned words from other people and each other in different kinds of communicative practices (Rogoff, 1990). This episode also illustrates that the children learned language through listening and interacting with the other people in their community; for instance, through songs in the church and in the radio. Songs are powerful resources of learning second languages (Jolly, 1975; Nuessel & Cicogna, 1991). For this reason, children's words were borrowed words from the people around them (Bakhtin, 1986). Finally, from a sociocultural view children's relationships were important as they learned language (Dyson, 2003) in this classroom. They needed each other's support in their learning.

Classroom talk was also ignited when the children drew and named items and colored. In the following episodes I will illustrate how the mere fact of drawing and naming and coloring made children talk to each as they ventured into writing practice. Writing practices and talk seemed to be intertwined in this classroom. These practices also encouraged children's relationship. [The children in the two episodes are speaking Swahili only].

Mrs. Swale: *Fanyeni hiyo kazi* [Do that work].

Rafiki: *Mwalimu tuchore* [Teacher do we draw]?

Mrs. Swale: *Ndio* [Yes].

SS: [The children start doing the exercise on page 95].

Mrs. Swale: [Steps outside].

Chiriku: Rafiki *mimi najua kuchora mgomba* [Rafiki I know how to draw a banana tree].

Rafiki: [Smiles, he is busy doing his work].

Chiriku: *Si ndio hii ninachora. Rafiki uko mkebe* [It is this one, I am drawing. Rafiki are you at the tin's drawing]?

Rafiki: *Mkeka* [the mat's drawing].

Chiriku: *Mimi niko mkate* [I am at the loaf of bread's drawing].

Rafiki: *Mimi niko mkulima* [I am at the farmer's drawing].

Chiriku: *Ningojee* Rafiki [Wait for me Rafiki].

Kambua: Rafiki, *unaambiwa ungojee* Chiriku [Rafiki, you are being told to wait for Chiriku].

Chiriku: Rafiki *nionyeshe hapa mkate* [show me the word "mkate"] [pointing to page 94].

Rafiki: [Has already written mkate].

Rafiki and Chiriku: [Browse back to get "mkate"].

Chiriku: [Got the spellings from a previous page].

Rafiki: *Huyo ako namba?* [This one is in number?][asking Chiriku].

Chiriku: [Does not answer Rafiki and she requests] Rafiki *nitafutie mkulima* [Rafiki get me the word “mkulima” (a farmer).]

Rafiki: [Tries to help, Mrs. Swale is back and he faces in front to continue with his own work].

Mrs. Swale: *Atakayepanga vizuri nitampatia zawadi* [Whoever arranges his work well I will give him/her a present].

Chiriku: [Still perusing the previous pages to get *mkulima*].

Rafiki: [Looks back at Chiriku and asks] *Unahitaji mgomba* [do you want *mgomba*]?

Chiriku: *Hapana* [No]. [Field notes, June, 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010]

In the above episode, Chiriku told Rafiki that she knew how to draw a banana tree. Rafiki smiled in return to Chiriku’s comment. Chiriku showed Rafiki her drawn banana tree and asked Rafiki if he was at the tin’s drawing. Rafiki replied and said he was at the mat’s drawing. Next, Chiriku announced she was at the loaf of bread’s drawing. However, Rafiki was ahead of the game and he told Chiriku he was at the farmer’s drawing. Chiriku on hearing that Rafiki was ahead of her requested him to wait for her. Kambua, who was seated next to Chiriku, announced to Rafiki once more that Chiriku was requesting Rafiki to wait for her. Next, Chiriku requested once more for Rafiki’s help in identifying the word “mkate” from the previous page. Rafiki helped her to identify the word. Rafiki also asked Kambua which number she was in, however he was not answered. Chiriku once more asked Rafiki for help in getting the word “mkulima.” Before Rafiki could get the word “mkulima” for Chiriku, Mrs. Swale came back to the classroom and announced that whoever was to arrange his or her work well will be rewarded. At that moment Rafiki looked back to help Chiriku by asking her if she wanted the word “mgomba” and Chiriku said no.

These children’s interaction, illustrates an important nature of written language from sociocultural and dialogic views. That is, talk, drawing, and print are inseparable when it comes to the children’s written language development. I agree with Dyson (1993) that “Children’s

writing cannot be studied separately from their talk and drawing” (p. 78). Thus, although the task at hand was for these children to draw and write the names of the items in that exercise, they could not resist talking to each other and in the process they built their relationships as children writers and Swahili learners. In addition, “They manipulated the elements of the written language system (e.g. letters, words)” (Dyson, 2003, p. 175). Rafiki, Chiriku, and their classmates learned how to write all the words in that exercise and more importantly they had each other’s company. They collaborated with each other in their journey of learning how to read and write.

In the next example the children were coloring. Coloring is one of the symbolic repertoires of written language. This example further illustrates how a child’s written language is inseparable from other media like coloring and talk. For instance, in this episode there was a lot of talk as the children exchanged different crayons and coloring pencils in their coloring and naming exercise. [The language of communication was Swahili].

Tambo: Muendi *nipe rangi* [give me color].

Muendi: *Hii si rangi* [This is not color] [she was holding a red pencil].

Mrs. Swale: [To Kavatha] *Nataka ukae hapa kuwaongoza kile watafanya* [I want you to sit here and lead these ones on what to do.]

Kavatha: [Guided his deskmates in reading the names of the colors because they did not know how to read].

Katulu: [Has broken one crayon].

Knight [Says in a musical tone] *Ayiaa Katulu, Ayiaa Katulu* [These were nonsensical sounds, meant to scare anyone in the wrong].

Fadhili: *Nipe* [Give me] orange [says “orange” in English].

Chiriku: *Hakuna* [no] orange. *Nipe hii* [Give me this] [points to the green crayon which Fadhili is holding]. Me *nataka hii* [I want this one].

Fadhili: [Gives her].

Akilimali: *Nani ako na jivu? Jivu?* [Who has grey? Grey?]

SS: [No one answers him]. [Field notes, July, 9<sup>th</sup>, 2010]

In the above extract, the children colored, talked to each other by asking for different crayons and pencils, and others helped their peers like Kavatha in reading the names of the

colors. This kind of exercise helped the children in practicing their language and literacy skills like writing names of the colors and reading them. They pronounced the words, they learned or engaged the vocabulary they knew, and they wrote names down and then colored. The teacher also encouraged collaborative learning by telling Kavatha to sit next to some children who needed help in reading the names of the colors. Collaborative learning is in line with sociocultural and dialogic views because language is learned in social interactions and dialogues among people. Through collaborative learning the teacher ensured the participation of all the students and counteracted the physical challenge of space and many children under one roof which could not allow the teacher to reach each child as an individual in every lesson. With the help of a peer, then each child was able to learn and participate in the classroom's literacy practices like coloring, drawing, naming, doing exercises and so forth.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have discussed how the Swahili official oral and written curricula were enacted. The pedagogical approaches which the teacher used included dialogic instruction where she encouraged use of voice, dialogue, and collaborative learning in her classroom. She also encouraged play, like the riddle game. Moreover, she encouraged and listened to the children's stories. Through allowing classroom talk in her classroom, the children in the classroom expressed their agency in their learning. They drew, sang, danced, talked, wrote, and used their mother tongue, Kamba. The children through use of different media and language in their writing, they were able to make meaning. The children also constructed meaning with their teacher as they engaged in the learning process.

In conclusion, I would therefore state that, despite the space limitation and shortage of literacy materials, the teacher was able to employ and encourage diverse classroom interactions

in her language instruction. In addition, the teacher-child relationship was that of a mediator or an expert and a novice; where the novice under the mediation of an expert moved from being a novice to an expert.

I want also to point out that the learning of Swahili in this classroom could not be divorced from its social and physical contexts. In fact, contexts are important in the language classrooms because “they are part and parcel of the language that happens there- how it is carried out and how it is understood” (Lindsfors, 1999, p. 217). This is why some of the practices which took place in this classroom were influenced by its social and physical contexts. For example, the riddle game was recontextualized from the community where the school was situated. The children’s songs were also borrowed from the community. The children used Kamba because Kamba was their mother tongue and also it was the language of communication in the immediate community. Furthermore, the role of riddles in the classroom which is one of the Kenya’s cultural resources encouraged the children’s participation in class because they were familiar with this practice from their community. Therefore, children’s prior experience with riddles played a great part in encouraging participation in this language event. Also, during riddles and in their play, the children code-switched to Kamba by using Kamba words, this code-switching was a resource in the children’s Swahili learning.

Also, children’s drawing acted as a first step in the development of learning to write. For example in Rafiki’s drawing, he drew and then narrated. In addition, drawing encouraged peer talk among the children and this encouraged their relationships as a community of learners.

Finally, storytelling in this classroom was a way for the children’s voices to be heard and also air their concerns and experiences. Through storytelling they also learned and practiced language.



Hence, the Swahili teacher's pedagogical approach was a reflection of what many educational documents (as seen in chapter four) advocated for- a child-centered teaching. This kind of learning is further elaborated in the next chapter which discusses how children took agency in their language learning during unofficial times.

## **Chapter 8**

### **The Unofficial Literacy Practices**

In this chapter, I will discuss the practices which took place during the “unofficial curriculum” (i.e. the children controlled practices) (Dyson, 2003). These practices included drawing, printing, singing, and reciting poems. I discuss the unofficial practices because in this first grade classroom, conventional English language practices which predominantly involved responses to oral and written language tasks like reading textbooks and chalkboard, reciting after the teacher, answering teacher’s questions, copying off the chalkboard or textbook, and filling blanks did not provide insights into the children’s personal experiences, identities, and imagination as the unofficial practices did. I view the children’s personal experiences, their identities, and nurturing of their imagination as important for meaningful learning to take place. Also, the unofficial practices provided an opening into the children’s “spontaneous concept development” (Vygotsky, 1978) in a way that English classroom conventional practices did not, that is, they allowed insight into how children used everyday experiences to understand how the world works. In addition, through the unofficial curriculum, children had agency in their language and literacy development. Based on the unofficial curriculum, I analyzed four major themes. These were children’s community practices, children’s experiences and identities, children’s imagination, and children’s use and understanding of language. These are the themes which the children wrote about or talked about as they engaged in different unofficial curriculum practices in their classroom.

In this chapter, I organize the data according to different kinds of unofficial practices. I will first discuss the drawing practice, which will be followed by printing practice, and finally, the singing and recitation of poems. It is important to note that the language of communication

during the unofficial curriculum was usually Swahili.

### **Children's Drawing**

In this classroom, there were three major times when drawing took place. First, it took place between transitions, that is, between lessons or subjects, topics, and teachers. There was usually time in between these activities. During these transitions, the children usually got into trouble with the teacher (Mrs. Simba) because of making noise or talking to each other. Some students knew the solution- to draw quietly. Second, drawing took place during tuition time or remedial time (explained in chapter 5). Lastly, it took place during after lunch preps (explained in chapter 5), that is, 1:30 – 2:00 pm. It was during prep times and remedial times when I was able to observe the whole literacy events. During transitions it was not possible because they were very short moments between 5 to 7 minutes. The children's drawings were in the following categories:

1. Pictures only
2. Pictures with labels
3. Pictures with related written down stories
4. Pictures accompanied by peers' talk

With “pictures only”, the children either read the pictures or told the stories which the drawings embodied. “Pictures with labels” entailed the children reading the labels or ignoring the labels and reading the pictures. I knew this was the case because some children could read written down English words in Swahili. For example, the word “table” could be read in Swahili as “meza”. In addition, in “pictures with related written down stories”, the children read the written down story but not the pictures. Finally, in “pictures accompanied by peers' talk”, a child drew a picture and this ignited talk from the peers or a peer joined in the drawing, that is, they

drew on the same page and talked in the process. These categories mattered in this study because they involved different uses of oral and written language. That is, the children talked, drew, sang, recited, or printed. Also, they presented different challenges to these child writers. For example, with “pictures only” if a child wanted to “write” a story through drawing, she/he had to think of the best way to present this story on paper. With “pictures with labels” and “pictures with written down stories”, a child had to deal with not just drawing but also with writing down of different words and text. The last category “pictures accompanied by peers’ talk,” a child had to deal with how best to relate with a peer. I viewed this last category as very important in building a community of language learners and building social relationships which are very important in language learning. From a sociocultural view language is learned through social interactions. For example, in this case the peers provided the setting for learning both oral and written language.

It is important to note that I did not observe efforts to build social relationships in the official English classroom. The official English curriculum seemed to encourage an individualistic style of learning, where competition through tests was highly encouraged with those who met these “standards” being rewarded with good grades and positive comments. Those who did not do well in the exams were not rewarded, but the problem was that there was no system in place in the English classroom to help those children who did not meet the English teacher’s “standards”. Below I provide illustrations of each kind of drawing and the stories read or narrated by the child to me. I audio recorded the stories as the children read or narrated them. I audio recorded the stories to transcribe later because I did not want to interfere with the child’s line of thought by telling them for example, to repeat if they had dictated them to me. Throughout the illustrations, I weave the themes of community practices, children’s experiences and identities, children’s imagination, and children’s use and understanding of language.

**Pictures only.** The picture below (fig. 8.1) was done by Rafiki during remedial time. He was seated next to Chiriku. Usually during remedial he sat next to many children. He drew this picture without talking to anyone. Rafiki's drawing illustrates the themes of community practices and children's identities, that is, going to church and a family member. He narrated the following story which will be followed by English translation in {}. This will be done in all children's narrations.



Fig. 8.1 Going to Church

*Tulikuwa tunaenda kanisani na gari. Hii ni gate* [points at the rectangular shape] *na watu walikuwa wanaenda* [points at the two people] *na tuliona basi* [points at the grey drawing]. {We were going to church [with his family] [has a cross at the top] by a car [the one at the bottom]. This is a gate [points at the rectangular shape] and people are going [to church][points at the two people] and we saw a bus [points at the grey drawing]}.

Rafiki has used drawing and talk to pass his message. He has informed his readers that as a family they go to church not by foot but by their car. Other people in his community go to church too, but the majority go by foot. Therefore, he has given his readers one of the practices in his community that is, going to church. Going to church every Sunday is a practice in Rafiki's community. During my stay in Rafiki's community and his classmates as I did this project, majority of the community members woke up early on Sunday morning to attend Sunday worship. Hence, through drawing Rafiki has positioned himself not just as a first grader but as a family member and a church goer. This topic of going to church and family resurfaced in many of his drawings and writings (print) and also in other children's work.

The next drawing (Fig. 8.2) comes from Kasuku. Kasuku attended the same nursery as Rafiki and they were longtime friends. She was the one who told me that they went to the same nursery. Kasuku's drawing illustrates the theme of imagination, that is, the snakes' world. She did the following drawing when she was seated next to Tausi. She did it silently during remedial. She narrated the following:

*Hii ni jiko* [points at the structure at the bottom]. *Na hii ni ghorofa* [points at the structure at the center]. *Na nyoka ikasema ikuje mpaka kwa ghorofa*. *Na huyu mtoto alikuwa anaenda sokoni* [points at the girl at the bottom]. *Na nyoka ikapatana na hii nyoka* [the circular lines]. *Na ni huyu hapa sasa akienda na hii barabara* [the girl on the top]. *Na nyumba yao ndio hii* [points at the storey building].

{This is a kitchen [points at the structure at the bottom]. And this is a storey building [points at the structure at the center]. And the snake said it would go to the storey building. And this child [points at the girl at the bottom] was going to the market. And the snake met this other snake [the circular lines]. And the child is here walking on this road [the girl on the top]. And this is their house [points at the storey building]}.

Kasuku has used drawing and talk to bring out her imagination on the paper. Kasuku shows some of the wild animals found in Kenya-snakes. Kasuku was not afraid of snakes as most of the children were. She always talked and wrote about snakes. It was her favorite topic. In her stories children met with snakes like the one above, sometimes snakes entered houses and

spit on people. They did not bite. Kasuku was able to narrate such complex stories through drawing.



Fig. 8.2 Snakes

In the following drawing (Fig. 8.3), Kasuku takes us to the river where someone is fishing and a truck is harvesting sand. Her drawing therefore, enlightens on these two important practices in this community, that is, fishing and sand harvesting for sale. Kasuku drew the picture as she was waiting for the teacher to come in. It was one of those transition times when every child is supposed to be dead silent waiting for the next teacher who may take ten minutes to

come in. Although there were some writings on top of the drawing those writings were there before she drew. She just used that available space in her Swahili exercise book. She was seated in her usual place between Malaika and Paulo.

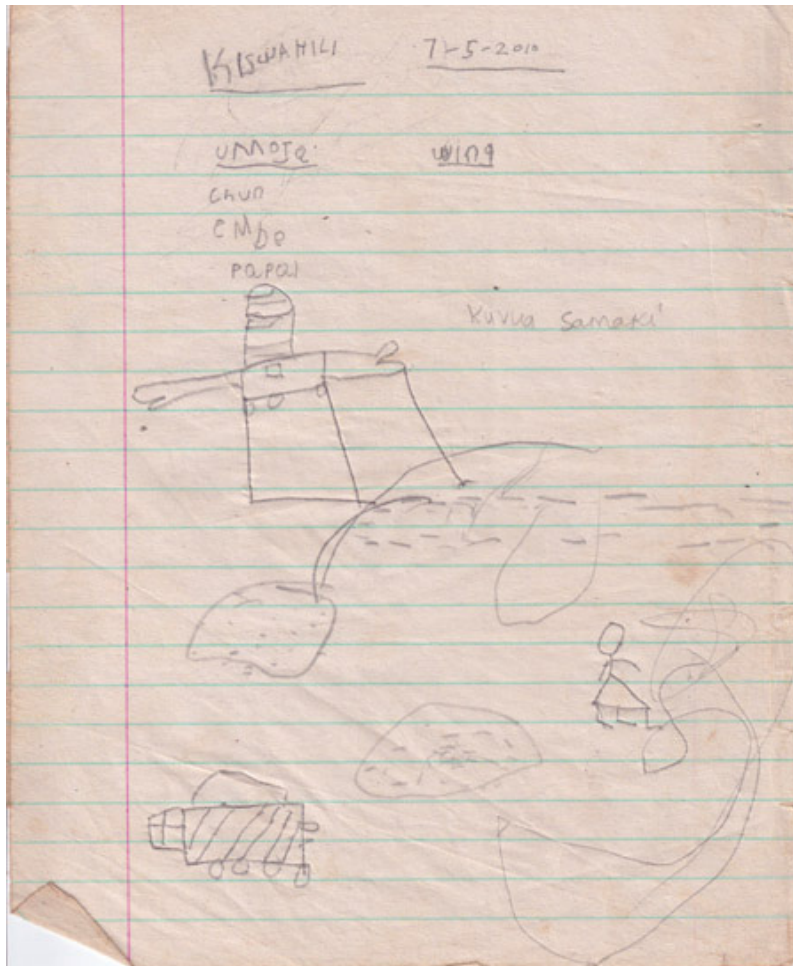


Fig. 8.3 Fishing, Sand Harvesting, and Snakes

She narrated the following story based on what she had drawn after the lesson:

*Huyu mtu* [points at the person holding fishing rod] *anavua samaki hapa* [shows the water-dotted]. *Sasa huyu mtoto* [points at the child in the picture] *akakaribia nyoka* [circular lines next to the girl] *akatemewa mate akaanguka kwa maji. Na hii gari* [points at it] *ilikuwa inatoka hapa majini ikaenda.*

{This person [points at the person holding a fishing rod] is fishing here [shows the water-dotted]. Now, this child [points at the child in the picture] approached this snake [circular lines next to the girl] and was spit on and then fell in the water. This vehicle [points at it] was coming out of the water and it left}.



Through this drawing Kasuku informs her readers that some people in her community do fishing. There is a very big river where fishing is done and sand harvesting is done and that is why we see a truck coming from the river. In fact, some people earn their living through sand harvesting. The trucks' owners come to buy sand from them for construction. In addition, Kasuku extends her story line on snakes spitting on children. Therefore, Kasuku has experience with people in her community fishing and harvesting sand for sale. Children being spit upon by snakes was her imagination. She had seen snakes, but she had not seen any one being bitten or spit upon.

Kasuku's ability to compose stories through drawing was well illustrated in the following drawing (fig. 8.4). I use this drawing to illustrate the role which drawing served in bringing out Kasuku's imagination and use of language on paper.

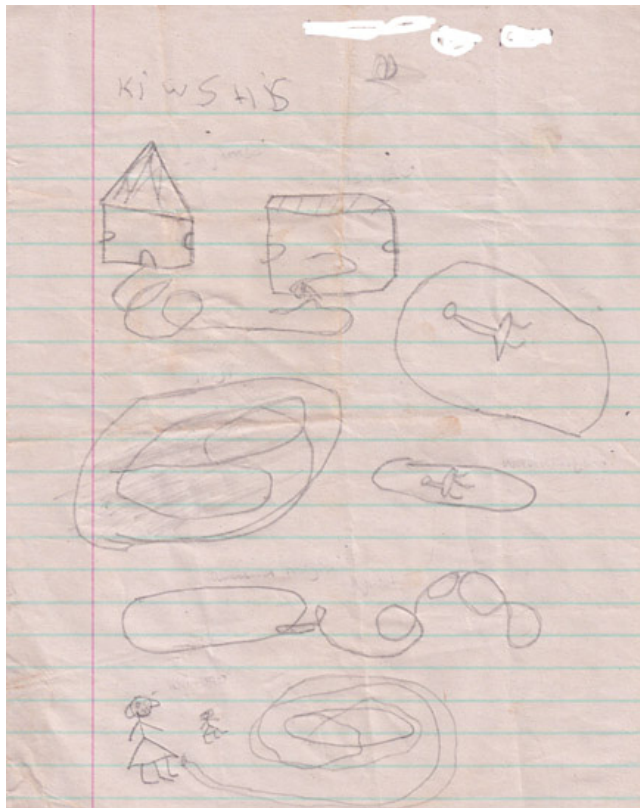


Fig. 8.4 Snakes, hut, and Toilet

She narrated the following story:

*Nyumba ilikuwa hapa* [points at the hut] *na nyoka* [points the coiled thing] *ikatoka msalani* [the square like structure] *ikaingia kwa nyumba* [points at the hut] . *Ikachapwa ikakufa. Ikakuja kutupwa hapa kwa maji* [points at the circular item at the center]. *Na ikakuja hapa kukula mayai ya kuku* [points at the oval item]. [I asked her: hata kama imekufa?] *Ndio. Na sasa hawa watoto* [points at the two children] *hawaogopi nyoka. Halafu huyu mtoto* [the big one] *anaita huyu mwingine* [points at the little one] *akakataa akaenda hivyo kakapatana na nyoka* [the coiled thing next to the children] *kakatemewa mate kakaja kufia hapa. Na aka kengine kakufia hapa.* {A house was here [points at the hut] and a snake [points the coiled thing] came out of the toilet [the square like structure] and went in the house [points at the hut]. It was then beaten and then it died. And then it was thrown here in the water [points at the circular item at the center]. And it came here [points at the oval item] to eat chicken's eggs. [I asked her: even though it is dead? She said]: Yes. And now, these children [points at the two children] do not fear snakes. Then, this child [the big one] is calling this other one [points at the little one] and she refused and then went to the other side and then met with the snake [the coiled thing next to the children] and was spit on and came to die here [points at the smaller child on her back] and the other died here [points at the bigger child on her back]}.

Kasuku's drawing and storytelling skills were well manifested in the above story. She also gave her readers some cultural information about her society. These were: she drew a hut and a toilet which usually stands alone from the houses. Also, snakes enter houses sometimes where they may meet with people and spit on them, eat chickens' eggs, and the snakes get killed by the people. It is important to note that people do not die out of this spitting usually; they are taken to the hospital. However, in Kasuku's imagination when children are spit upon, they die.

Therefore, Kasuku has shown that through drawing children's imagination is cultivated and nurtured. It is important to note that Kasuku's written language took the form of drawing and talk only apart from one drawing where she named her family members and herself which will be discussed later under the next category of drawing.

The next illustration comes from Tausi who was sitting next to Kasuku. Tausi drew the following picture (fig. 8.5) during remedial. Just as many other children in her class did, she drew it quietly. I use Tausi's drawing to illustrate the theme of imagination as well as children's experiences. Here, Tausi adds more information about snakes and enlightens on the safety topic. She said the following about her drawing:

*Sasa huu ni mtoto [the child under the car] amekanyangwa na gari. Huu mama [the first person on the left] ameona nyoka [the lines next to the people] akasema haogopi na akakuja akakufia hapa [the second person on the left –who is the same one] kwa sababu ameumwa.*

{This child [the child under the car] has been crushed by the car. This woman [the first person on the left] has seen a snake [the lines next to the people] and then she said she is not afraid and then came and then died here [the second person on the left –who is the same one] because she has been bitten.

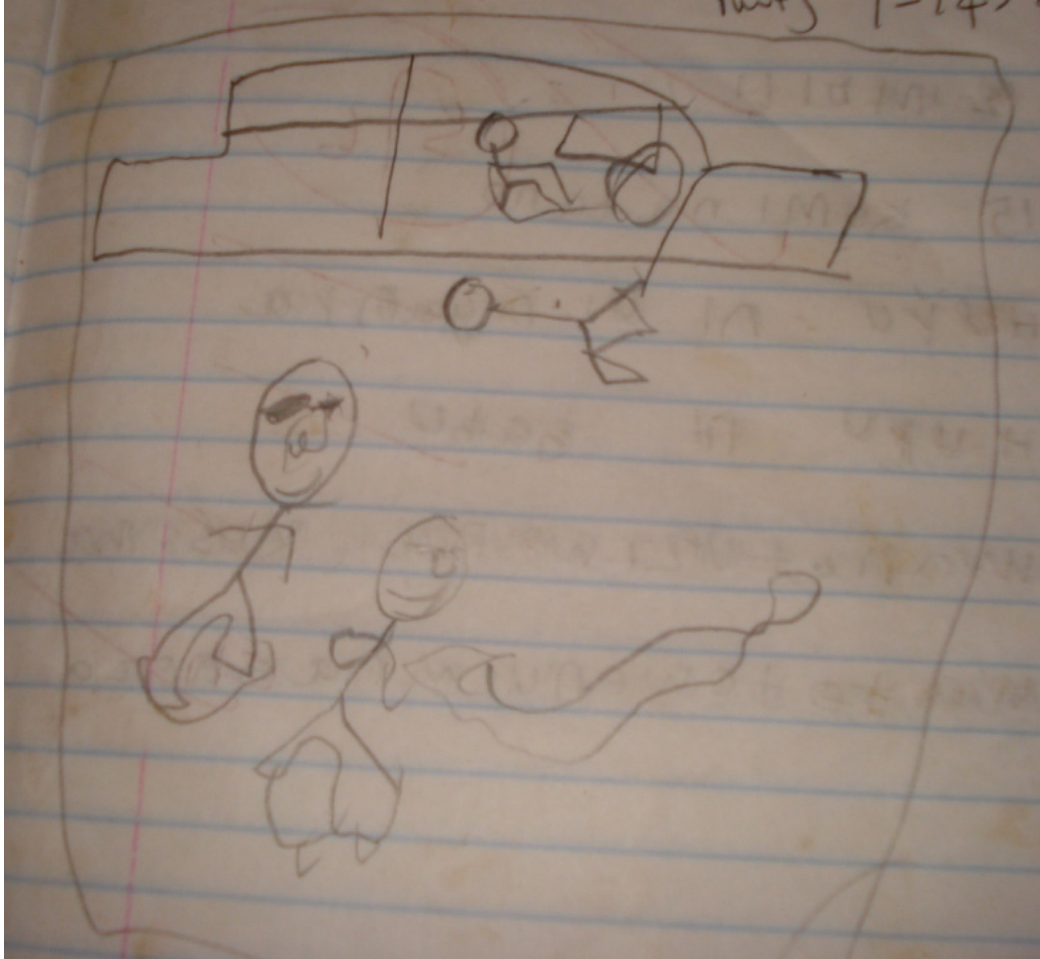


Fig. 8.5 Snakes and Safety on the Road

Tausi just like her peers has used both talk and drawing to bring out her imagination and experience with snakes and safety on paper. She tells something more about the snakes in her location. They can also bite. This is something which Kasuku did not inform her readers concerning snakes. She only mentioned about children being spit upon by snakes. She also brings the idea of children being crushed by cars for not being careful on the road. This was a lesson covered in the Social Education class where the emphasis was on road safety and being

careful as they crossed the road otherwise they may be crushed. Their school was next to a very busy road which most of the children had to cross to come to school. This was a lesson being repeated in her story.

The next illustration (fig. 8.6) is from Chiriku. She drew during remedial. She was seated next to Rafiki. She completed her drawing without talking to anyone. I use Chiriku's drawing to illustrate the theme of imagination where vehicles have been given human qualities and children's experiences, that is, being careful with strangers. She narrated the following story:

*Magari mbili zinaenda sokoni* [the two vehicles at the top right side]. *Na tena lori moja inaenda kununua vitu* [the one on the second row from top]. *Na hawa watoto* [points at the children] *wanaambia mtu huyu* [points at the truck] *bye na hawamjui, na hapa* [points to where they were standing] *wamebondwa na wakaingizwa kwa ambulance* [the vehicle with a cross]. *Na hapa lori zinafuata ambulance* [the two vehicles at the bottom]. *Na hii ni bendera* [at the very bottom]. {Two vehicles are going to the market [the two vehicles at the top right side]. And again another truck is going to buy things [the one on the second row from the top]. And these children [points at the two children] are saying bye to this person [points at the truck] whom they do not know, and here [points to where they are standing] have been crushed and have been put in the ambulance. And here, the trucks are following the ambulance [the two vehicles at the bottom]. This is a flag [at the very bottom].

In this story, Chiriku has used the media of talk and drawing to bring her imagination out just like Kasuku and Tausi. In her story, vehicles have been given power to go to the market and buy things. The children have been crushed for being careless and Chiriku, just like Tausi, is passing a message to the children who talk to the people they do not know. This was one of the lessons covered in the Social Education class where the teacher emphasized not to talk to strangers. Hence, Chiriku is borrowing her teacher's voice in telling her audience through her writing that they should not talk to strangers. Otherwise, there will be consequences like being crushed. It is important to note that most of the truck drivers are not from this community; they are strangers. Most of them belong to the construction companies in the city of Nairobi.

Therefore, Chiriku is for sure correct in portraying truck drivers as strangers to the children in her school.

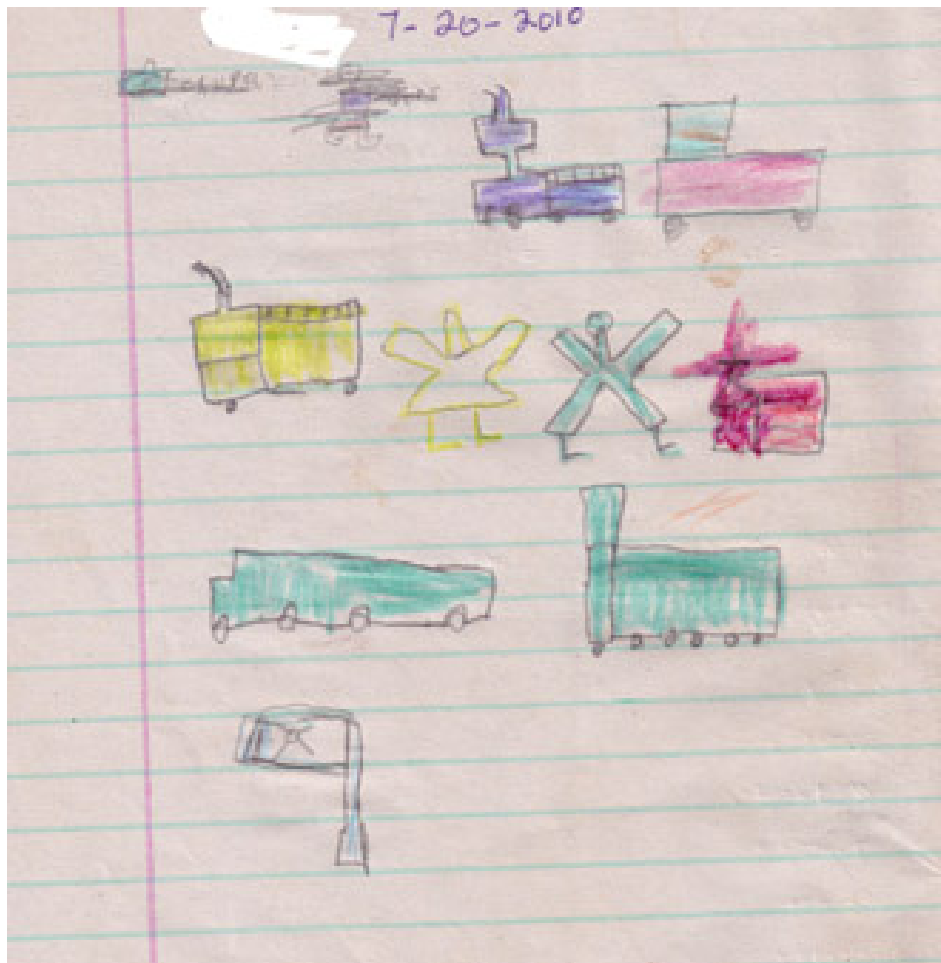


Fig. 8.6 Means of Transport and Safety

Finally, Chiriku drew the following picture (fig. 8.7) during remedial. She was seated next to Rafiki and Mbula. She drew quietly. This drawing illustrates the themes of community practices (i.e. going to school) and children's experiences (i.e. driving). She narrated as follows:

*Hii ni nyumba* [points at the house on top left]. *Hawa watoto* [the two children on the road] *wametoka kwa nyumba na wanaenda kwa shule, wanaenda, wanaenda, wanaenda*. *Hapa ndio shule* [points on the house at the bottom]. *Na gari inaenda sasa, ndio hii* [points at the vehicle on the road] *imekuta hapa* [the end of the road] *pakinyesha*. *Akarudi* [shows a U – turn] *akarudi akarudi, akapark hapa* [the vehicle on the side of the house] *na akaenda*.  
 {This is a house [points at the house on top left]. These children [the two children on the road] are coming from the house and are going to school, they are going, going, going. This is where the school is [points at the house at the bottom]. And the vehicle is moving now, it is this one

[points at the vehicle on the road] it found this place [the end of the road] raining. He [driver] went back [shows a U-turn], went back, went back, and then he parked here [the vehicle on the side of the house] and then left.}

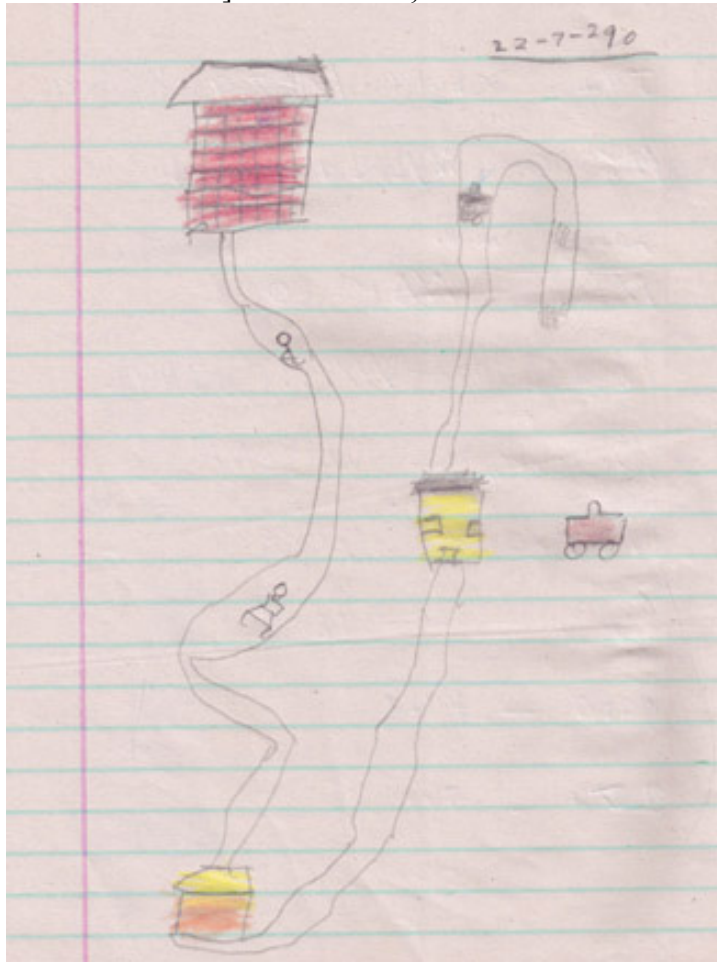


Fig. 8.7 Going to School and Driving

Once more, Chiriku has passed her message on through drawing and talk. She has told her readers that children walk to school and sometimes rain can cause drivers to go back and park their cars. Usually in the rural areas the roads are not tarmacked and roads become impassable when it rains. For example, see the following talk which came up as we were coming from the playground with the children.

I commented, “*Leo kuna jua; unafikiria kutanyesha?* [Today is sunny; do you think it will rain?]

Some SS: *Hapana* [No].

Some SS: *Ndio* [Yes].

Some SS: *Nataka inyeshe* [I want it to rain].

Esther: *Kwa nini* [Why]?  
 Mosi: *Mimi sitaki inyeshe* [I don't want it to rain].  
 Esther: *Kwa nini* [Why]?  
 Rafiki: *Kwa sababu magari yatakwama* [Because the vehicle will be stuck].  
 Mosi: *Bodaboda zitakwame* [Motorcycles will be stuck].  
 Rafiki: *Halafu tutasukuma* [Then we will push].  
 Esther: *Wewe huwa unasukuma* [Do you push]?  
 Rafiki: *Ndio, mimi husukuma ya baba yangu* [Yes, usually I push my dad's car].  
 Chiriku: *Mimi husukuma ya aunt yangu, baba yangu na mama yangu* [Usually I push my aunt's, my dad's, and my mom's].  
 Mosi: *Mimi husukuma yangu* [Usually I push mine].  
 Kasuku: *Mimi husukuma ya uncle yangu* [I usually push my uncle's]. [Field notes, June, 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010]

Looking at the excerpt above, it is a true picture of what Chiriku drew; vehicles get stuck when it rains and people have to push them as Rafiki, Kasuku, Chiriku, and Mosi have told us in the above conversation. Also, these children's reasoning is remarkable; they do not want it not to rain for the sake of it. Rafiki was the first one to say the cars will be stuck. Remember his dad has a car and he has participated in helping push the car when it gets stuck. The other children have also participated in helping push the cars of their families and relatives. Therefore, the theme of children's experiences either at school or at home is well illustrated by the above dialogue and Chiriku's drawing. That is, going to school and pushing vehicles when they are stuck on untarmacked roads due to rains.

Reflecting back on what the children have presented through their drawings and narration, I see these children as having agency in their own language and literacy development. The children are telling the teachers, the parents, friends, etc., "look we have something to say about our learning and our lives in general." Also, through drawing these children who can write and those who can't write as yet may draw out their imaginations. Next, I will look at pictures with labels.

**Pictures with labels.** The children not only drew pictures but they also attempted to put some labels below or besides the pictures. Their work just like the “pictures only” was a good example of some of the familiar and meaningful objects in their lives. Rafiki drew the following drawings and labeled the drawings (fig. 8.8). Rafiki’s drawing and labels illustrate children’s use and understanding of both Swahili and English language. He read the labels as follows:

*Church* [The Church]  
*Church limefungwa* [The Church is locked]  
*Nyumba limefungwa* [The House is locked]  
*Gari* [A Vehicle]

As I have already shown in the previous section, church, vehicles, and houses were part of these children’s lives. In his drawing, Rafiki wrote some words and sentences to illustrate what he had drawn. This shows that these children writers could use different media (i.e. drawing and print) at the same time to convey their ideas. Rafiki had written “church”, “nyumba” [a house] and “gari” [a vehicle] correctly he had misspelled the word “limefungwa” as “limwa fungwa”[it is locked]. Not only did Rafiki just like the other children deal with Swahili spellings, but Swahili word morphology was also a big challenge for these child writers. In his writing Rafiki used both English and Swahili to label his pictures. However, he only wrote single words in English just like many children did in this classroom. Also, just like the other children, he did not use Kamba anywhere in his writings.





Fig. 8.8 Rafiki's Labels in English and Swahili

Rafiki also drew and labeled his pictures in English only. The next picture (fig. 8.9) illustrates the theme of children experiences with English language. He read his written down labels: a chalkboard (which he had written as “chak board”, on his chalkboard he had written “fungueni 900” but he did not read it), a house, a bottle, a tree, a pot, a cow (which had seven feet!). Rafiki (just like his classmates) is showing that English language is part of his repertoire but he is learning it. He can name items even though he is not at a level where he can write stories in English. But Swahili is there as a resource in helping him and his classmates to pass their oral narratives and also written down stories as we shall see later for the children who were able to write down stories using print.

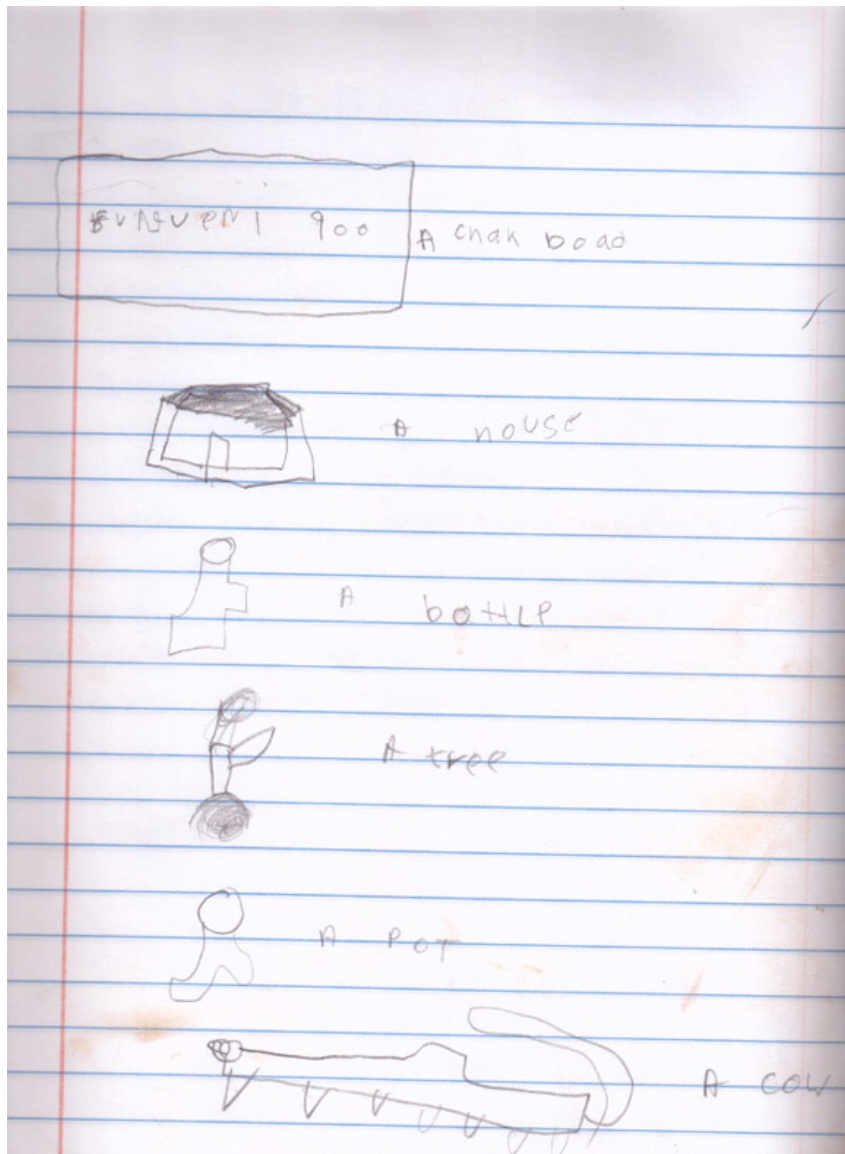


Fig. 8.9 Labels Written in English

Next illustration (fig. 8.10) is from Mhariri. She did the following drawing during prep time. She was seated next to Akilimali. During preps the children were to be quiet. Mhariri's production illustrates what these children could do with English. She in fact, produced English sentences not just words as we have seen with Rafiki. Rafiki's sentences were written in Swahili but not English. She read as follows:

This is a bell.  
This is a jug.

This is a ball.  
This is a house.  
This is a table.  
This is a book.

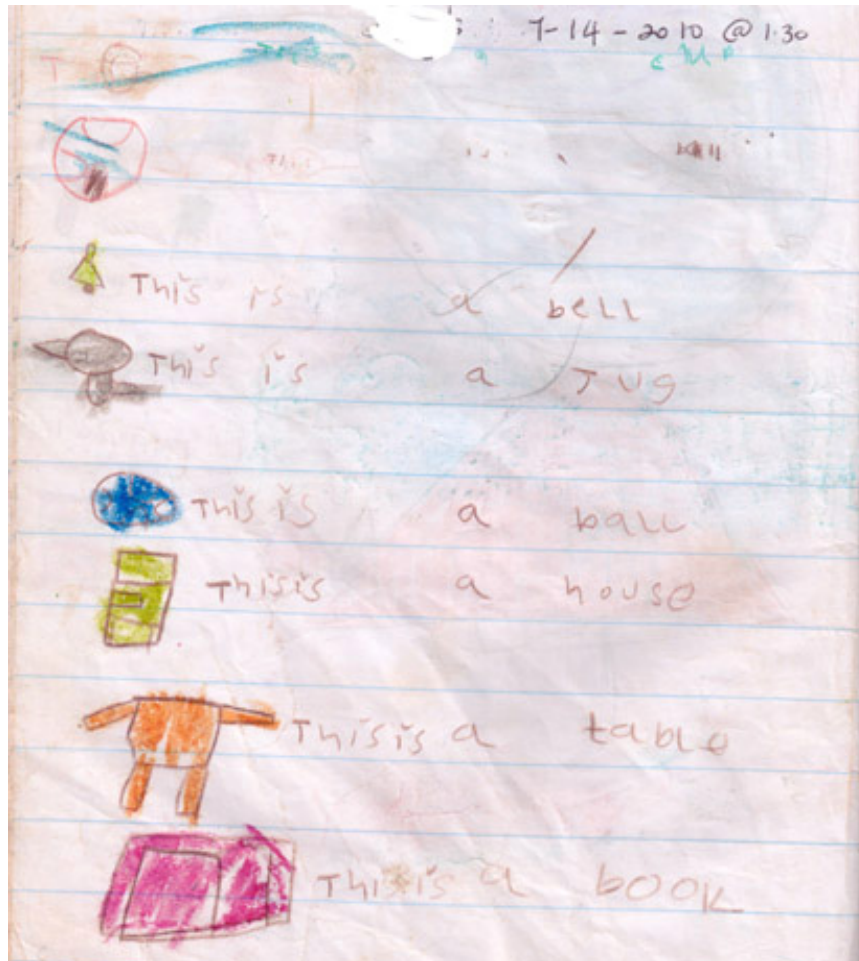


Fig. 8.10 Mhariri's English Writing

Therefore, in the above drawing, Mhariri included her English repertoire in her writing although she just wrote some repeated phrases, that is, "this is ....." This is what Samway (2006) refers to as "stylized sentence writing" (p. 43). With this pattern Mhariri was able to produce as many sentences as possible so long as she knew the name of the object in English. This was a pattern used by several children in the class to produce many sentences in English but the challenge came if the child forgot the pattern or got it wrong. See illustration (fig. 8.11) from

Mbula who was a friend to Rafiki, Kasuku, Mhariri and Chiriku. She had written and read her sentences as:

The is a girl  
The is a mama  
The is a baba [father]  
The is a boy  
The is a car  
The is a book  
The is a ball  
The is a bell  
The is a house  
The is a cup  
The is a apple  
The is a dog

Mbula intended her sentences to begin as “This is .....” but she got it as “The is....” She also generalized the article “a” for everything, that is, she wrote, “a apple”. Mbula’s need for information illustrated one consequence of drawing/writing being strictly an unofficial activity in the classroom.

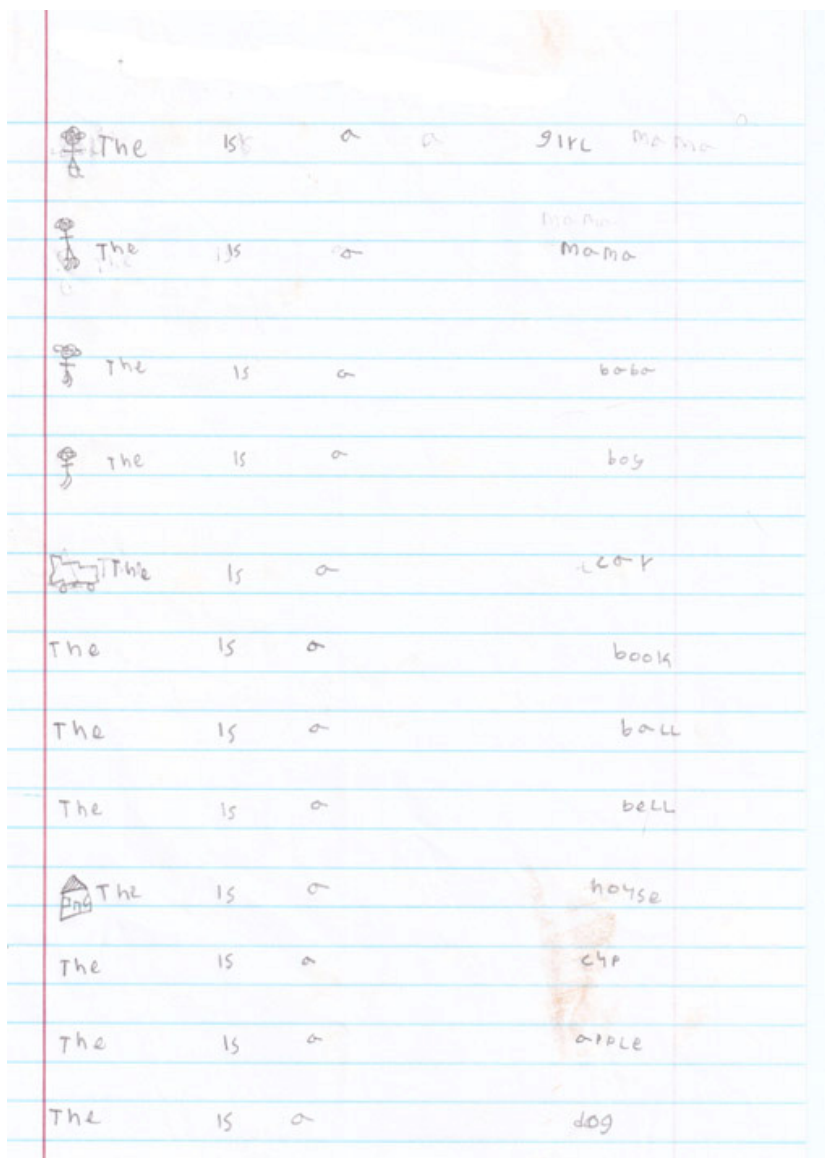


Fig. 8.11 Mbula's English Writing

The next illustration (fig. 8.12) is a family portrait from Kasuku. Kasuku did not just read the labels as other children did. She explained who was in the picture: herself and her family-mother, father, and her sister. This illustrates Kasuku's use of oral and written language. She did the following drawing quietly while seated next to Tausi. She narrated as follows:





Fig. 8.12 Kasuku's Family Portrait

*Huyu ni babangu* [points at the first picture] *anaitwa Kioko na mamangu anaitwa Ann* [points at the second picture]. *Na sistangu anaitwa Purity Kioko* [points at the picture]. *Na ni mimi huyu* [points at the picture]- *Ann*. *Na hii* [points at the vehicle] *ni gari kubwa yetu na hii ni kaa yetu* [points at the small car], *na hii ni dirisha yetu* [points at it] *na hii gari ingine yetu* [points at it]. {This is my dad [points at the picture] he is called Kioko and my mom is called Ann [points at the second picture]. And my sister is called Purity Kioko [points at the picture]. And this is me [points at the picture]- Ann. And this [points at the space colored green] is our big car and this is our car [points at the space colored brown], and this is our window [the one colored grey with a square-like shape] and this is our other car [points at the space colored orange]}.

Kasuku has used the media of talk, drawing, and print to tell us about her family and their vehicles and window. She knows how to write their names. It is interesting that Kasuku did not draw their vehicles but just colored them and imagined they were vehicles. This is just like in child's play where an object may symbolize another object (Vygotsky, 1978). In addition, Kasuku's talk about her drawing emphasizes the importance of child's talk in written language. Without Kasuku's talk as readers we would not have known that the colored spaces were two vehicles!

Therefore, looking at the children's drawn pictures and labels, there is a simple message, which is often in the form of a label (Samway, 2006). With this label the reader has a glimpse of what the picture is about but this is not enough, the talk which accompanies and follows the picture and the label is crucial. Through the children's illustrations, I have shown that these children have experiences with written language, they not only draw but they can print as well through simple words or sentences in either Swahili or English.

**Pictures with related written down stories.** I use these illustrations to show children's use and understanding of language and community practices. The first illustration comes from Rafiki. Rafiki did the following drawing (fig. 8.13) when he was seated next to Chiriku. It was a quiet moment for him.

He labeled each item from right as follows: *Ben, Salome, Ndolo, Ngeni [Jane], gari, nyumba, dog, cow*. Below the items he wrote the following sentence: *nita kusomea Esta naunipe karatasi*. Also, he read it as follows:

*Ben, Salome, Ndolo, Jane, gari, nyumba, dog, cow. Nitakusomea Esther na unipe karatasi.*

{Ben, Salome, Ndolo [Ben is Rafiki's father, Salome is his mother, Jane is his aunt, and Ndolo is his uncle], a vehicle, a house, a dog, a cow. I will read to you Esther and then you will give me a paper}.

Then, he said:

*Babangu, mamangu, aunt na uncle yangu walienda Makueni kwa shule ya Nzisa. Walienda na gari hii ambayo ni matatu. Hii ni nyumba yetu na hii ni mbwa yetu. Anaitwa mwanga.*

{My dad, mom, aunt, and uncle went to Makueni [a place] at Nzisa's school [Nzisa is Rafiki's aunt too]. They travelled by a vehicle which is known as matatu [he pointed at the drawn vehicle]. This is our house [pointed at the house] and this is our dog [pointed at the dog]. He is called Mwanga.



Fig. 8.13 Rafiki's Family

Rafiki drew a picture of his family, two animals, a vehicle, and their house and showed one of the community practices which his family does together, that is, visiting a family member at school. In fact, I once met him with his grandfather and aunt going to visit this aunt as I was going to visit my nephew in a different school. Visiting children in boarding schools is a common practice in Kenya. In addition, without Rafiki telling us the story in the picture we may have just assumed he drew some people and named them, two animals, a house, and a vehicle. Therefore, for these children to talk about their drawings was critical to my understanding of their stories and allowed them to practice spoken language as well. Moreover, it was through Rafiki's narrating of his story in the drawing that we as readers are able to see the ability of



Rafiki to narrate and manipulate the Swahili language. Rafiki is a second language learner of both Swahili and English but the English he used was to name “dog” and “cow;” that was all. English did not appear in his narration at all. After telling his drawn “story”, Rafiki wrote the story in fig. 8.14. This is how the story was read:

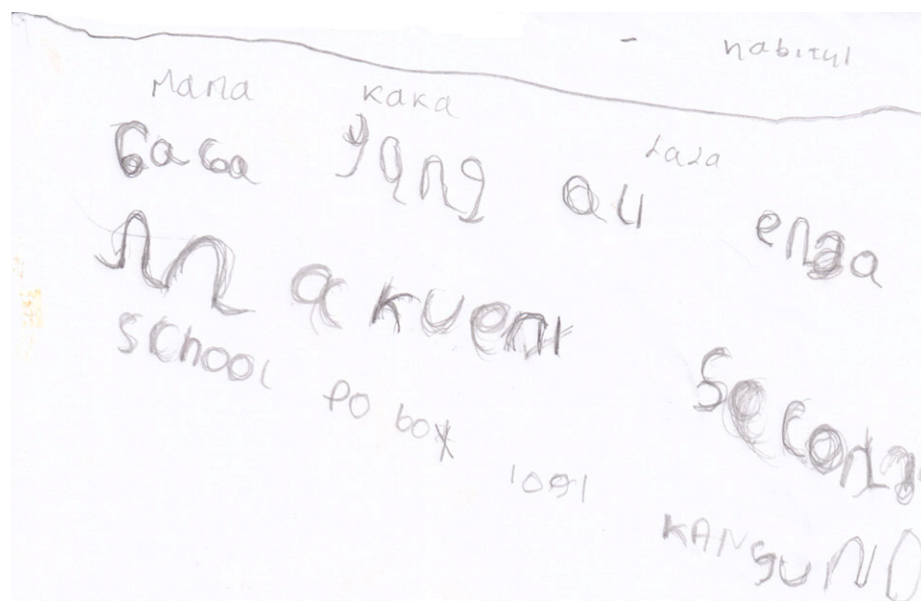


Fig. 8.14 Rafiki’s Swahili Writing

*Baba yang alienda Makueni Secondary School. P.o. Box 1091, Kangundo.*  
 {My dad went to Makueni Secondary School. P.O Box 1091, Kangundo.}

At the top right corner he wrote “habithi” [hadithi]. “Hadithi” means a story. Therefore, he alerts his readers that he is going to write a story. The story was about his father going to Makueni Secondary School. Rafiki has written letter ‘d’ in “hadithi” as ‘b’ he is confusing these two letters. He also gave the address of Makueni Secondary school as 1091 Kangundo, this was his school’s address but as readers we note that Rafiki is aware that schools should have addresses. It is also clear that Rafiki has not developed fully the control of writing in a straight line but he has developed the concept of writing from left to right. He has not fully developed the idea of word boundaries in Swahili as well. Swahili is an agglutinating language and usually this

is a major challenge for young Swahili writers as we have seen in other children who attempted to use print. He wrote the word “alienda” as “ali enda” (he went), he wrote it as two words. Also, he wrote the word “Makueni” as “M akueni”. It is also obvious that Rafiki seems to be curtailed by print which is not allowing him to narrate as much as he can. Therefore, it is not surprising that he chose to use his school’s address which he is familiar with and sees daily on his exercise books and at the school’s gate. Remember, this was the story where his family went to visit his aunt at Makueni. Hence, talk complements print or drawing and a novice writer is able to give a complete story through talk after controlling his speaking skills.

In addition, Rafiki wrote down the following (fig. 8.15) English story which he copied from the class textbook. The class had read this story in the previous term. This illustration extends the theme of children’s experience with oral and written language. He had drawn some pictures as well.

English textbook acted as a resource for Rafiki and his classmates. He did not just copy the story but he had drawn the pictures of the Kenga family and other items which he also wrote below the story. These were “msichana” (girl), “ua” (flower), sun, “baba” (father), mama (mother), children, “gari” (car), “chui” (cheetah), “mti” (tree), and “kitabu” (book).

Also, he did not copy everything because he did not include punctuations which were in the original text, for example, commas and periods. He also forgot to include Mr. in the first sentence. Hence, Rafiki has appropriated a voice from his class text but has also given it his voice; the voice of a novice writer who is yet to develop punctuation.

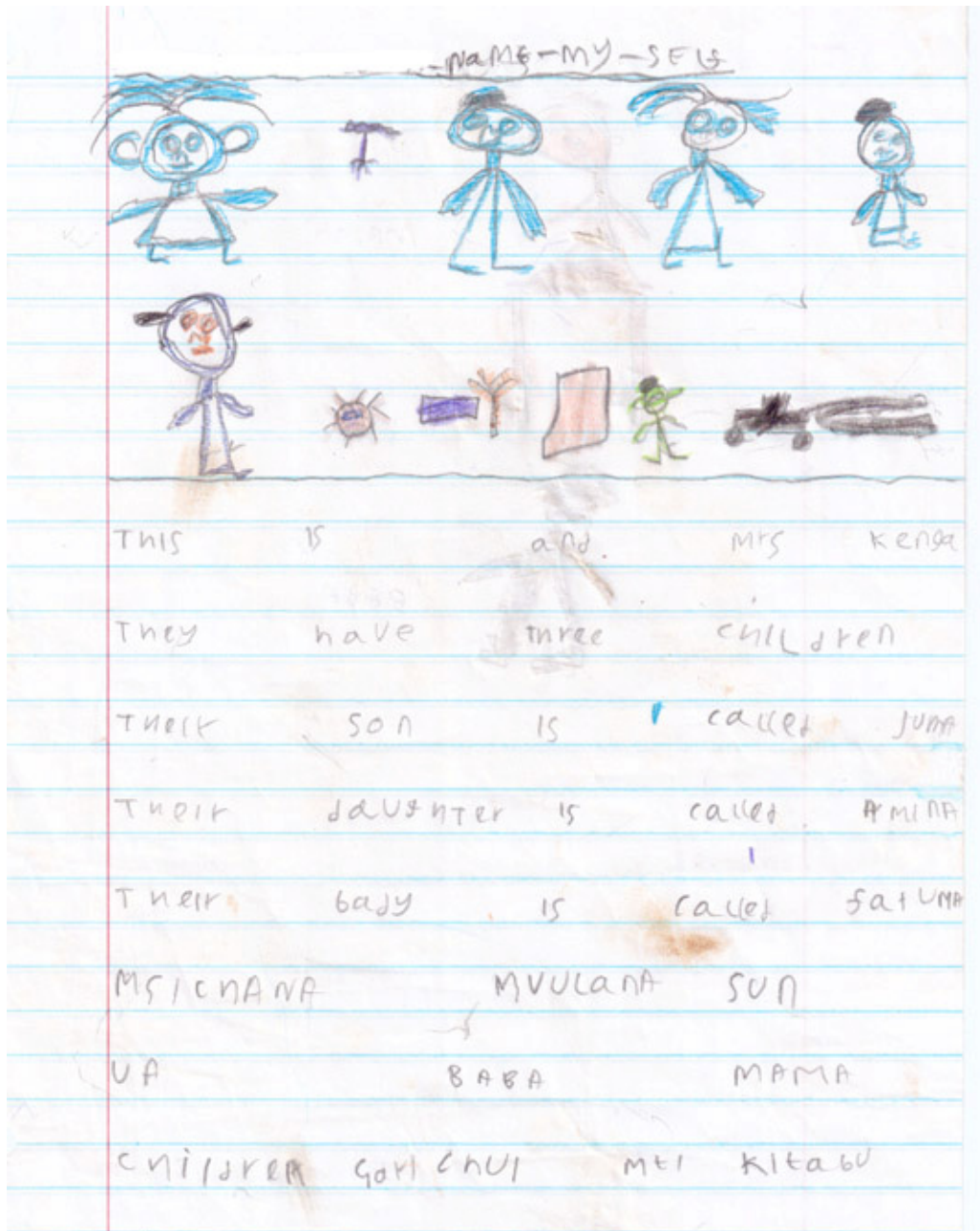


Fig. 8.15 Rafiki's English Writing

Chiriku did the following portrait of her family (fig. 8.16) quietly during remedial. Her work illustrates children's experiences with oral and written language and community practices, that of traveling, going to the market to buy items, and children playing at the playground. She was seated next to Rafiki.

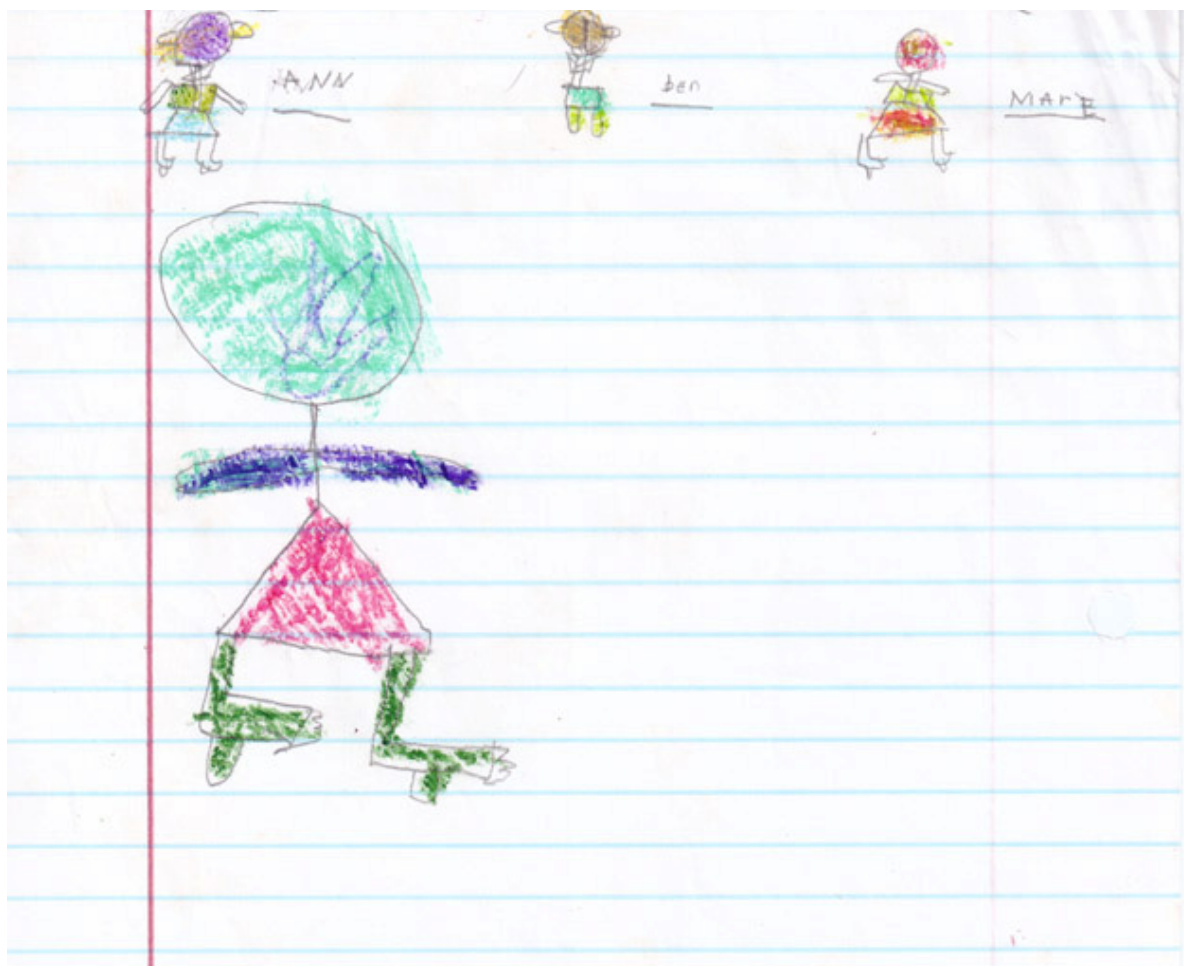


Fig. 8.16 Chiriku's Family

She narrated the following:

*Ann* [her mother] *anaenda kununua mboga*. *Na Ben* [her father] *anaenda kununua sukari*. *Na Mary* [her sister] *anaenda shuleni*. *Na Emma* [her big sister] *anaenda kwa uwanjwa*.

{*Ann* [her mother] is going to buy vegetables. And *Ben* [her father] is going to buy sugar. And *Mary* [her sister] is going to school. And *Emma* [her big sister] is going to the playground.}

Then, she wrote the following text:

*Ann an enba shokoni kununua maziwa* [Ann is going to the market to buy milk]

*ben ana Enba kunua sukari* [Ben is going to buy sugar]

*Mare ana Enba safari* [Mary is going for a trip]

*Emmana Enba kucheza michezo* [Emma is going to play]

Just like her peers, through talk and drawing, Chiriku has told us about her family and some of the activities they do. They go to the market, school, and the playground. However, in the print version Chiriku has some challenges. For example, she has written “d” as “b” in “an enba” it is supposed to be “anaenda”. Also, just like her peers she is facing the challenge of

Swahili morphology. She has written “anba kunua” instead of “anaenda kununua”, “Emmaana Enba” instead of “Emma anaenda”. She is also facing spelling challenge and punctuation. She wrote “shokoni” instead of “sokoni” and begins “Ben” with a small letter, and there are no periods at the end of her sentences.

Looking at what Rafiki and Chiriku did which was common among the other children in the classroom, it is clear that these children have different experiences with oral and written language. For example, they are facing the challenges of punctuation, word morphology and spelling in Swahili. Also, they have illustrated that Swahili and English are resources in their written language development. This is why they were able to write stories in Swahili and make some sentences and write some words in English. Through their writing, they have also illustrated some of the practices in their community as well. That is, visiting family members in boarding schools, travelling, going to the market to buy items and children playing. In the next section I will look at pictures accompanied by peers’ talk.

**Pictures accompanied by peers’ talk.** In this section I will give the whole literacy event as it occurred followed by English translation. The examples illustrated here are used to extend the themes of community practices and children’s identities and experiences with oral and written language. The first illustration comes from Fadhili and Mutinda. They were friends. They sat next to each other and played together on most occasions. This example further illustrates the theme of community practice of going to church and children’s identity as Christians and speakers of Kamba, Swahili, and English as we have already seen in the previous sections. The following literacy event took place as they were waiting for the Swahili teacher to come. They each drew a cross on the same page as shown below (fig. 8.17):

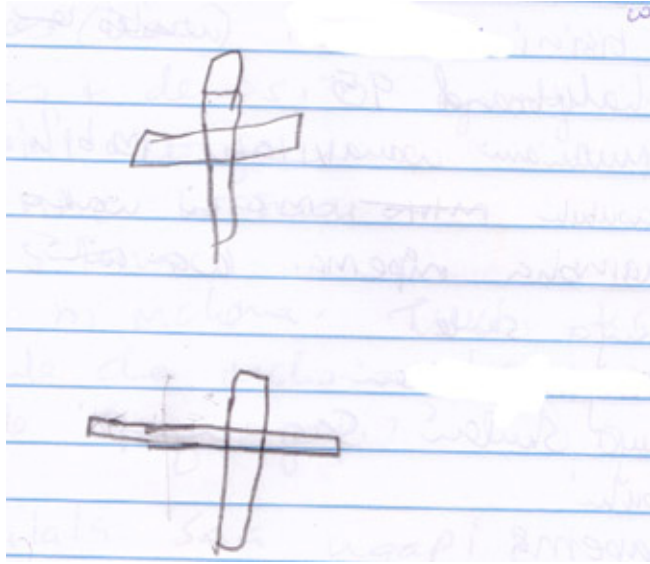


Fig. 8.17 Fadhili's and Mutinda's Drawings

Fadhili was the first to draw followed by Mutinda.

After drawing they were involved in the following conversation in Swahili:

Fadhili: *Msalaba wa Yesu.*

Mutinda: *Ndio* (smiles)

Fadhili: *Huyu ni msalaba wa Yesu. Niliona msalaba kwa kitabu cha CRE Yesu akiwa hapa* [points at the cross]. *Msalaba katika kanisa huwa kwa ile saduku iko hapo mbele, msalaba kidogo.*

Mutinda: *Mimi niliona msalaba kutoka kwa kitabu cha CRE.*

Fadhili: [Sings in Kamba]

***Ambaniw'e na ing'ei ili na ing'ei ile Kaivali***

***Na kimwe ni kyatangiiwe Kaivali***

***Ambaniw'e na ing'ei ili na ing'ei ile Kaivali***

***Na kimwe ni kyatangiiwe Kaivali***

Mutinda: [Grins and laughs].

Fadhili: (Says in English) The cross of Jesus

Mutinda: (Responds in English) Yes (smiles)

### English Translation

Fadhili: This is the cross of Jesus. I saw the cross in the CRE [Christian Religious Education] book with Jesus here [points at the cross]. Usually, the cross at the church is in the box which is at the altar, a small cross.

Mutinda: I saw the cross in a CRE book.

Fadhili: (Sings in Kamba)

[The following is its English translation]:

He (Jesus) was crucified with two thieves, two thieves at Calvary

And one was saved at Calvary

He (Jesus) was crucified with two thieves, two thieves at Calvary

And one was saved at Calvary.}  
Mutinda: [Grins and laughs].  
Fadhili: (Says in English) The cross of Jesus  
Mutinda: (Responds in English) Yes (smiles)

Fadhili and Mutinda were both familiar with the “Cross of Jesus”- not any other cross but the cross of Jesus as Fadhili points out, “This is the cross of Jesus.” Both attended Sunday school every Sunday morning. They also attended school’s Thursday devotion every week at the church next to the school. Moreover, they took Christian Religious Education and at one lesson they had drawn and talked about The Cross. See part of this Christian Religious Education [CRE] lesson about the cross of Jesus. The dialogue was in Swahili.

Mrs. Swale: *Msalaba unatukumbusha nini?*  
Tausi: *Kuzaliwa kwa Yesu.*  
Mrs. Swale: *Si kuzaliwa kwa Yesu.*  
Mwinzi: *Dhambi zetu.*  
Mrs. Swale: *Yesu alisulubiwa msalabani kwa ajili ya ile Mwinzi amesema.*  
SS: *Dhambi zetu.*  
Mrs. Swale: *Hiyo inatukumbusha tusifanye dhambi. Yesu alisulubiwa kwa dhambi*

---

SS: Zetu. (Fieldnotes, May, 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010)

### **English translation**

Mrs. Swale: What does the cross remind us? Tausi.  
Tausi: The birth of Jesus.  
Mrs. Swale: Not the birth of Jesus. Mwinzi.  
Mwinzi: Our sins.  
Mrs. Swale: This reminds us not to sin. Jesus was crucified for our \_\_\_\_  
SS: Sins.

Therefore, Fadhili and Mutinda and other students in the class are familiar with the community practice of going to church and this why they could relate to this cultural item of the Christian faith in many ways. Moreover, in his song Fadhili gives us the history of the Cross. He takes his audience to Calvary and its happenings. Hence, once more we hear a church voice in this class through the children and the teacher as she teaches Christian Religious Education. Also, through Fadhili’s singing in Kamba, he evidenced his identity as a Kamba speaker. He also

sang in English and Swahili. See the following song which he sang as he was working on his English assignment:

*Little prayer*

*Little prayer*

*Kesho ni Bible school* [Tomorrow is Bible school]

*Kesho ni Bible school* [Tomorrow is Bible school]

Hence, his identity as a speaker of Swahili, Kamba, and English is revealed through his singing and talk. He also borrowed the church practice/voice and appropriated it in his literacy activities just as we have seen with Rafiki and the other children in the classroom.

The next illustration comes from Fadhili and Mhariri. They were just classmates. I use their illustration to extend the theme of community practices and children experiences with oral language and building of relationships. This literacy event took place during remedial time.

Fadhili had drawn or put final touches to his drawings (fig. 8.18) when this attracts Mhariri's attention who is done with teacher's work just as is Fadhili and other children.

Fadhili: [Has drawn a bus on the road].

Mhariri: [Helps Fadhili color the road brown without asking any permission from Fadhili].

Fadhili: [Drawing church].

Mhariri: *Hiyo ni church*.

Fadhili: *Sijaweka mlango*. [He draws the door. The church is marked by the cross.]

[Mhariri colors the roof of the church with yellow color while she colors the walls brown.

Fadhili has also drawn a house with no door and Mhariri begins to put the door.]

Fadhili: [Surprised] *Unafanya nini?*

Mhariri: [Relaxed] *Ninaweka mlango*. [She puts a house door and colors its roof pink and walls green]. [She begins drawing something and Fadhili says]:

Fadhili: *Usichore*.

Mhariri: *Ninachora mbwa*. [She colors her dog red in color].

Fadhili: [Relaxed] *Ninachora mpira. Utakuwa mgumu!*

Mhariri: *Chora mwingine*.

Fadhili: [Draws another ball as per Mhariri's suggestion]. [He draws a pencil and announces]: *Hii ni pencil. Nitachora mfuko*. [He draws a bag and has written his name beside it. He has also written down letters 'a', 'u', 'a', 'b', 'v', 'a', 'e' which he read loudly as he wrote each letter.]



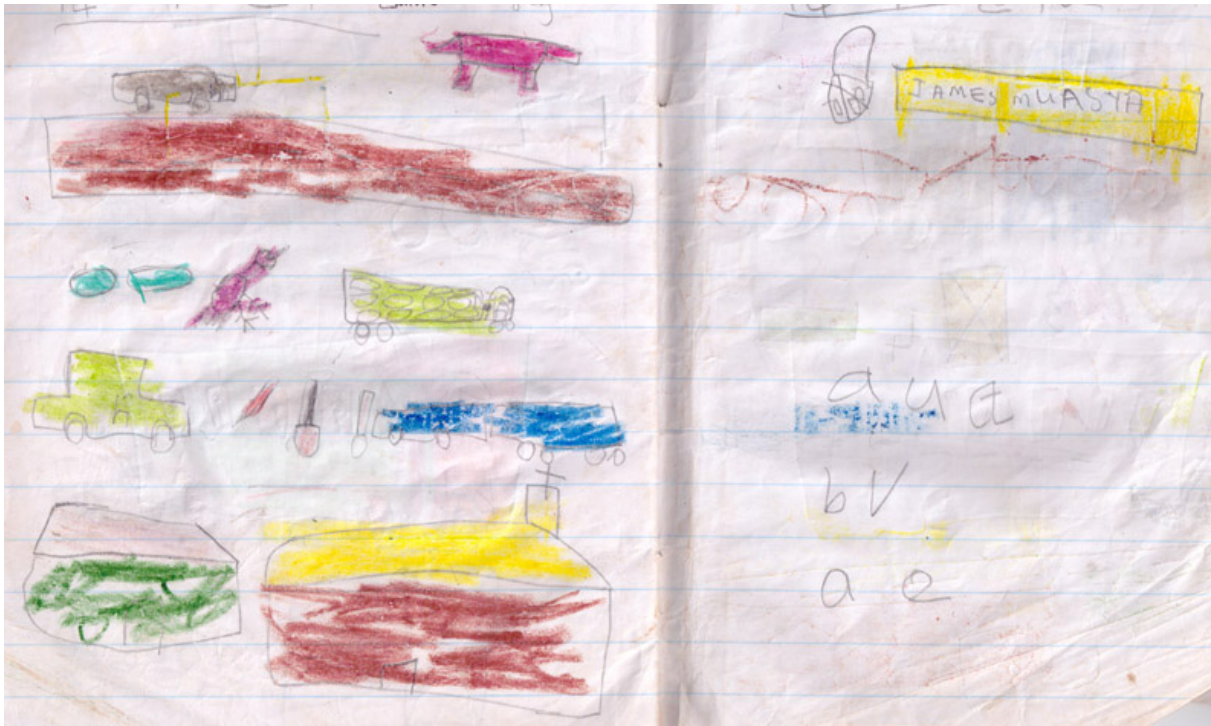


Fig. 8.18 Fadhili's and Muhari's Drawing

### English translation

Fadhili: [Has drawn a bus on the road].

Mhariri: [Helps Fadhili color the road brown].

Fadhili: [Drawing church].

Mhariri: That is church.

Fadhili: I have not put the door. [He draws the door. The church is marked by the cross.]

[Mhariri colors the roof of the church with yellow color while she colors the walls brown.

Fadhili has also drawn a house with no door and Mhariri puts the door.]

Fadhili: [Surprised] What are you doing?

Mhariri: [Relaxed] I am putting the door. [She puts a house door and colors its roof pink and walls green]. [She begins drawing something and Fadhili says]:

Fadhili: Don't draw.

Mhariri: I am drawing a dog. [She colors her dog red in color].

Fadhili: [Relaxed] I am drawing a ball. It will be hard!

Mhariri: Draw another one.

Fadhili: [Draws another ball as per Mhariri's suggestion]. [He draws a pencil and announces]:

This is a pencil. I will draw a bag. [He draws a bag and has written his name besides it. He has also written down letters 'a', 'u', 'a', 'b', 'v', 'a', 'e' which he read loudly as he wrote each letter.]

I see the above activity as children doing what children do-playing together. Playing together may take many forms. This one took the form of drawing and coloring even though Fadhili wanted to be in control because it was his exercise book, but Mhariri was very tactical in

the play. She knew how to play the game. For example, she colored, drew doors, and drew a dog which Fadhili had not thought of drawing. Through their play, they were also building a relationship as classmates. Also, Fadhili had recorded several letters and shows he also knows some letters and more so he knows how to write his name down. Finally, Fadhili has brought the church practice/voice once more in the form of church drawing in the classroom.

Looking at the literacy events which have been discussed, this illustrates that these children needed each other as they ventured in the world of language and literacy development. They needed a listening ear, helpful hand, and a player partner with whom they can laugh together.

**Conclusion on drawing.** As I have stated, drawing was an “unofficial curriculum” (Dyson, 1993) (i.e. children controlled) in this classroom. Through drawing children were taking agency in their own language and literacy development. They exploited many topics in their drawing. These included church, snakes, vehicles, families, etc. In the official curriculum or the teacher controlled curriculum drawing played no role. The teachers did not know that it existed before I began this project. They were amazed by what the children were doing. Drawing played a major role in the children’s language and literacy development. For one, drawing kept children from being in trouble with the teachers because of talking. During transitions as already mentioned the children drew to keep themselves occupied, and therefore out of trouble with the teachers. Secondly, through drawing the children were able to put their imagination on paper and reenact their real life experiences as well. As readers we have learned a lot about who these children were. For example, they were church goers and family members. Third, they were able to tell narratives out of their drawings. Through narration, oral language was exploited to the maximum. Fourth, it was through their drawings that they were motivated to label some of their

drawings using written language and also some children through drawing they were able to compose stories. Thus, drawing was a preliminary stage and accompaniment in their written language development. Moreover, through talking with their peers as they drew when the circumstances allowed, they were able to develop their oral language skills and also played together as children. Play is very important for children as they learn language and literacy. Vygotsky (1978) states, “in play a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself” (p. 102). Hence, a child through play can achieve what he/she could not achieve by his/her own. This collaborative talk as the children drew helped them in their language development and learning as they explored the world around them and their ideas. Also, through drawing the children “recontextualized” (Dyson, 2003) different voices/practices around them, like their teachers’ voices and church’s voice. As a result both their written and oral language skills were developed. So, it is well manifested through the unofficial curriculum in this classroom that in learning to write and speak, children make use of their whole symbolic repertoires (Dyson, 1989, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978) as it will be revealed in the coming sections.

### **Children’s Written Stories**

Sometimes the children wrote down stories which were not accompanied by any drawing or peer’s talk. These stories were only written during remedial/tuition time. Generally, these stories were written in Swahili. When English stories occurred they were copied from the texts though once Rafiki attempted to write an English poem from memory which he had recited in nursery school. It will be included in this section as well. Rafiki’s print still illustrates the themes which I have already discussed, that is, community practices and children’s experiences in this case travelling to different places and children’s experiences with written language. Other

examples from Rafiki which will be discussed after this illustration show how he developed as a language learner over time. See Rafiki's first Swahili (Fig. 8.19) written story which he read as it was written down.

### English translation:

I went with grandfather to Nairobi  
 I went with aunt to Makueni  
 I went with grandmother to Mombasa  
 I went with mom to Embu  
 I went with dad to the supermarket

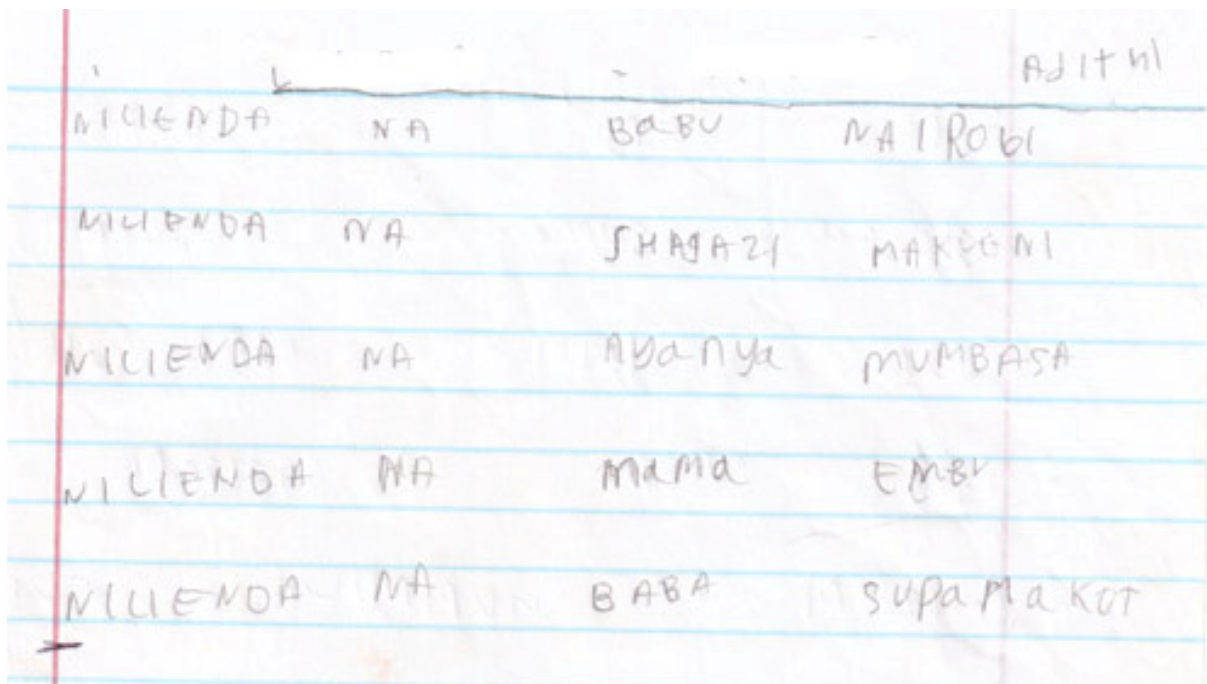


Fig. 8.19 Swahili 1

Rafiki introduced his story by writing “Adithi” [hadithi] story. Indicating he is writing a story. He capitalized on stylized sentences technique to pass the message to his readers that he had gone to several places with his family members. He went with grandfather to Nairobi, went to Makueni with his aunt. Remember his drawing of going to visit his other aunt to Makueni accompanied by an elder aunt and grandfather? Also, he went to Mombasa with his grandmother,

went to Embu with his mother and went to the supermarket (which he had written as “supamaket”) with his dad. It turned out these were six stories compressed into one. In addition, Rafiki has mixed both capitals and small letters in his sentences and there are no periods at the end of the sentences. But these are grammatical issues which are overcome with time.

The next Swahili story (Fig. 8. 20); Rafiki wrote it towards the end of the term. This story illustrates Rafiki’s experience of falling sick and missing school. He had missed school for four days and he wrote the story during remedial time. When he wrote this story, he was seated next to Chiriku and he did not utter any word until he was done writing. He came to show me the story and read it to me.

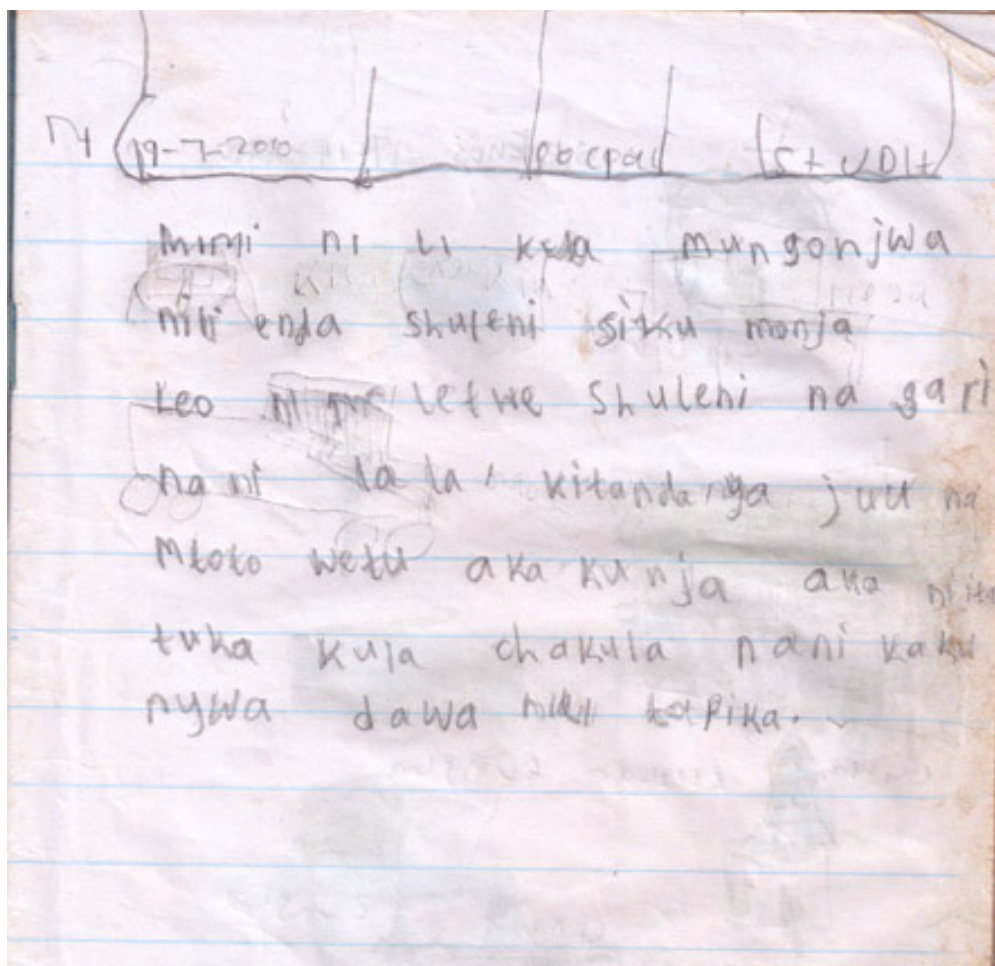


Fig. 8.20 Swahili 2

This is how he read it:

*Mimi nilikuwa Mgonjwa. Nilienda shuleni siku moja. Leo nimeletwe shuleni na gari. Na nililala kitanda ya juu. Na mtoto wetu akakuja akaniita. Tukakula chakula. Na nikakunywa dawa, na nilitapika.*

{I was sick. I attended school for one day. Today, I was brought to school by a car. I slept on the upper bed. Our child came to call me. We ate food. And I took medicine, and I vomited.}

Rafiki seemed to have made great progress in his writing. In fact, he did not need the support of drawing or talk to make his story complete. We have it in print form only. Also, he had one issue or one story, that is, “while he was sick what happened.” He informed his readers why he missed school for four days and how he came to school that day and what happened while he was sick at home; He ate food, took medicine, and vomited. He seemed to have control of some of the word boundaries for instance, “mtoto”[a child], “wetu”[our], “kitanda” [a bed]; however, he is still struggling with verbs like “nilikuwa”[I was] which he wrote as “ni li kua”, “nilienda” [I went] wrote as “nili enda”, “nimeletwe”[I was brought] wrote “ni me letwe”, “akaniita”[she then called me] wrote “aka niita” etc. He had put a period at the end of his story but he had yet to learn to put commas (he put a comma between “nililala” [I slept] and “kitanda” [a bed], he did not need a comma here) and periods at the end of every sentence and capital letters in the beginning of every sentence, etc.

Moreover, Rafiki wrote the following Swahili story (Fig. 8.21) three weeks after the above story during remedial. He wrote it quietly. I use this story to illustrate the development of Rafiki in his written language and to show one of the community’s practice-fetching water. He read it as follows:

*Nilienda na gari yetu na mama yangu, baba yangu na baba yangu alikuwa amebeba mitungi za maji. Na ninakuja na msichana wetu yule yuko shule ya nane na tukaenda. Nilichoka nikiwa kwa njia na nikiwa niko karibu kufika nyumbani, na tukapata msichana wetu akikula mapera. {I went by our car with my mom and dad. My dad was carrying water pots. And I came with our girl who is in eighth class, and we left. I was exhausted on the way when we were almost arriving home; we met with our girl who was eating guavas.}*



22-7-2010  
 nili enda na gari yetu  
 na mama yangu baba yangu na  
 baba yangu ali kua ame mbeba  
 mitungi za maji naniha kuita  
 na msichana wetu yule yuko  
 shule ya nani natukae nda nika  
 chona nikilwa kwa njia nanihika  
 niko kari mbo kusika ndani  
 ngumbani na tu ka pata msichu  
 na letu ali kua mapeta

Fig. 8.21 Swahili 3

This story is longer than the previous ones (i.e. Swahili 1 and 2). In this story Rafiki writes on the fetching water practice. In this community there was no water running in taps. People fetched water from the water pumps or underground wells. Rafiki is becoming comfortable using print even though he is struggling with the agglutinating nature of Swahili

language. For example, he wrote “ali kua” instead of “alikuwa”[she was], “ame mbeba” instead of “amebeba”[he carried], “nanina kunja” instead of “na ninakuja”[and I came], “tuka pata” instead of “tukapata” [we met]. He knows words in a sentence have to be spaced and writing should be from left to write and down. He is still struggling with punctuation but he was able to close his story with a period just like in the previous story.

In addition, Rafiki wrote the following English story (Fig. 8.22) which was a recited poem in nursery school. This is an important illustration because Rafiki has written in English from his recitation practice in nursery (preschool); hence, this example illustrates the theme of children’s experiences at school and also his experience with oral and written language. I will duplicate his writing and provide translation for easy reading.

AAd one ngi mbailust micholling my bed [A thousand and one G, by Lucy Misieni, my bed]  
 I Avali to bed gasi fomi mam’s [I have a little bed, just for me, mom’s]  
 To bick foriti dad’s to bick foriti [too big for it, dad is too big for it]  
 dursi I yavali to bed dursi [Do you see I have a little bed, do you see]  
 Pusi gasi fomi [Pussy just for me]  
 Pap’s gasi fomi [Puppy’s just for me]  
 Is gasi fomi thegiu [Is just for me, thank you]

In this production, Rafiki appropriated a nursery poem’s voice in his writing. Therefore, his experience as a preschooler has helped him and has been used as a resource in his writing. Rafiki also made use of his Swahili spelling knowledge when he did not know the English spellings. Therefore, his knowledge of Swahili spelling was used as a resource in writing down this English poem. For example, “for me” he wrote as “fomi”, “for it” he wrote as “foriti”, “pussy” he wrote as “pusi”, “thank you” he wrote as “thegiu” etc. The same poem was recited in front of his Swahili teacher and other students. He recited as follows:



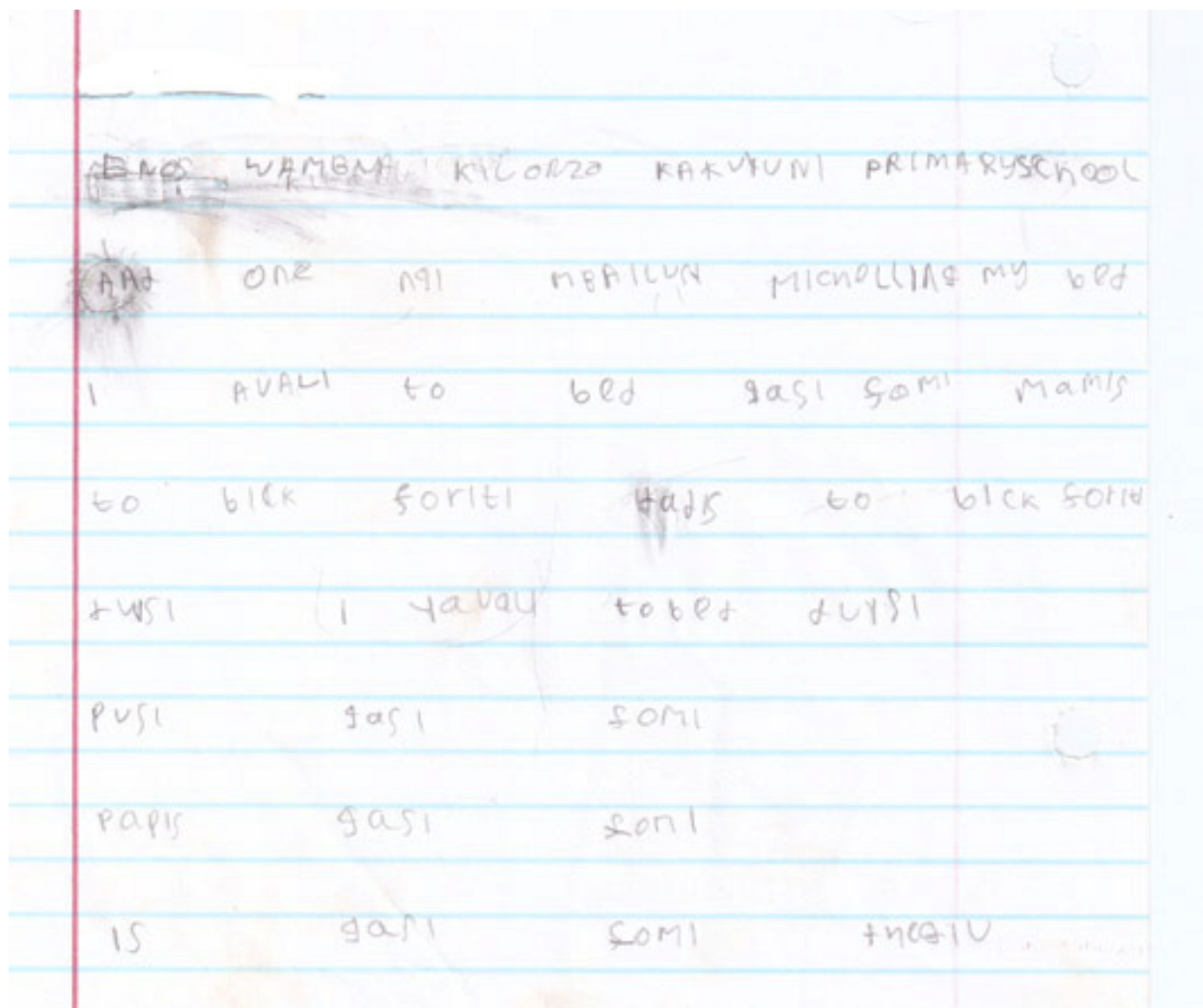


Fig. 8.22 English 1

Rafiki Kalonzo, Kalimani Primary School,  
Class one thousand and one G, by Lucy Misieni

### My Bed

I have a little bed, just for me, just for me  
Mummy is too big for it, Daddy is too big for it  
Do you see? I have a little bed, do you see?  
Pussy is too small for it, puppy is too small for it  
Do you see? Just for me.

After reciting Mrs. Swale advised:

Mrs. Swale: *Kuwa ukisema ndio usisahau* [Be reciting so that you don't forget]

Rafiki: *Ndio* [Yes].

The teacher saw this reciting of poems as a resource which should not be forgotten as Rafiki continued learning English language. Little did the teacher know that Rafiki had used this poem as a resource in his writing! So, her advice was helpful to Rafiki.

Next example comes from Chiriku (Fig. 8.23). I use this example to illustrate how Chiriku developed as a writer over the period I was in this classroom. She wrote this story towards the end of the term, Chiriku wrote the following when she was seated next to Mbula:

This is how she read it to me:

*Nilikula ndizi ya soko nikashiba sana na nikaondoka. Mama yangu aliniletea mandizi tamu sana. Mama yangu ni mzuri sana.*

{I ate a banana from the market and I was too full and I left. My mother brought me very sweet bananas. My mother is very good.}

In this story, Chiriku used only print without the help of drawing and talk and she was able to pass her ideas about what she ate and her mother. Chiriku and her family ran a shop at the shopping center near the school. It is not surprising that she was talking about bananas from the market because she usually went through the market and their shop on her way home. She has also informed her readers about her mother who is very good. In addition, she is still facing morphology, spelling, and punctuation challenges like her classmates; for example, “Ni Likula” instead of “nilikula” [I ate], “yagu” instead of “yangu” [my].

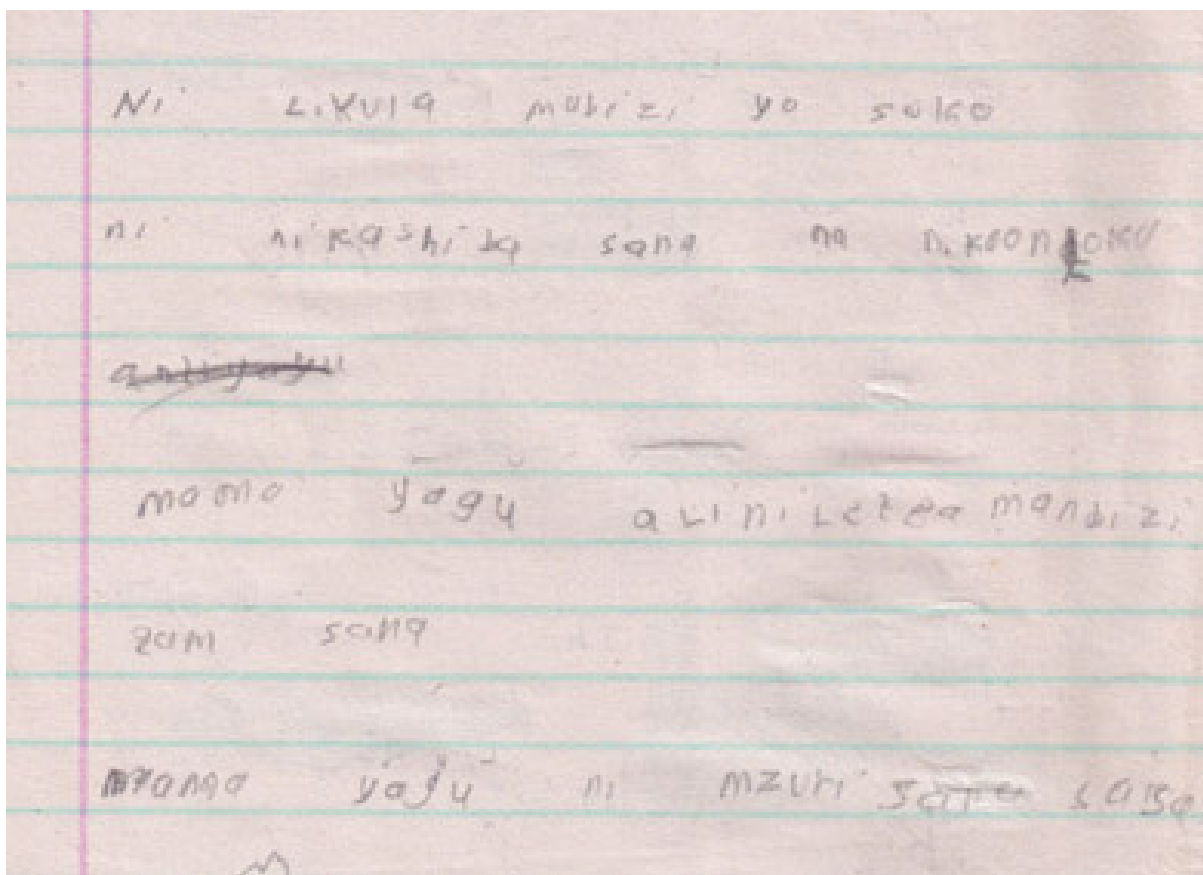


Fig. 8.23 Chiriku 1

**Conclusion on written stories.** Just like drawing was unofficial curriculum in the classroom, so were the written down stories. This was the work of the children's initiative. The English teacher just gave them fill in blanks exercises and copying handwriting for example, letter patterns. It is obvious that through the writing of these stories children developed their oral and written language. There is no well-cut division between oral and written language; they intersected and therefore they may develop simultaneously especially for second language learners. In addition, through the writing of these stories just like the drawings, the children had an opportunity to put down their experiences in life and their imagination. Through writing Rafiki told his readers about his sickness, his going to fetch water with family, the Kenga family, his nursery poem, and his visit of many places with his family. Chiriku told us about her mother.

## Children's Songs and Poems

Sometimes, children seated together recited songs related to what they were doing, for example, drawing or copying or doing exercises in class. Also, sometimes they sang songs and recited poems for enjoyment; they were not related to what they were doing. In fact, Tausi and Fadhili regularly engaged in these interactions. These songs and poems were reflective of their experiences and community practices, for instance, their religion and school. They did these practices during transition times and sometimes sang or recited poems through the instructions of the Swahili teacher. I will only discuss the unofficial singing. To start us off, let's join the singing and reciting of Tausi and her two best friends: Malaika and Mbula and other children in the group. I use this example to further illustrate these children's experiences at school and their identities as church goers.

On this day, Tausi and her classmates are busy copying Swahili sentences from the chalkboard and the teacher is busy too grading students' exercise books at the back of the classroom. I hear Tausi go in low tone and rhythmic: *Haya Masimbamba*.

Malaika [joins in]: *Haya Masimbamba*.

Tausi and Malaika: *Maji ya thumuni*

*Maji ya kunywa maji*

*Aiya mama*

Muendo: *Hiyo tulikuwa tukiimba nasari*.

### English translation

Tausi: Okey Masimbamba [somebody's name]

Malaika [joins]: Okey Masimbamba

Tausi and Malaika: Fifty cents' water

Drinking water mama

Aiya mama

Muendo: We sang that one in nursery

This was a child play song in nursery as Muendo stated. Tausi and Malaika brought a nursery voice in this classroom through this song just as Rafiki did with his English poem of "my bed". Moreover, they were playing and entertaining themselves as they copied sentences off the

chalkboard which could be very tedious to the children. As the copying continued Tausi sang the following Christian Gikuyu song. Gikuyu is one of the indigenous languages in Kenya.

Tausi: *Iguru tugaina.*

[She is joined by the other students in the group: Malaika, Mutua, tambo, and Mbula]:

*Iguru tugaina.*

*Iguru tugaina.*

### **English translation**

{In Heaven we will praise

[She is joined by the other students in the group: Malaika, Mutua, tambo, and Mbula]

In Heaven we will praise.

In Heaven we will praise.}

After sometime of copying and silence, Tausi sings the following Christian Kamba song:

*Yesu mwana wa Ngai osa ndaia.*

*Yesu mwana wa Ngai osa ndaia.* [The other children in her group laugh when they hear the song].

Muendo: *Wacheni kucheza hiyo ni wimbo ya Mungu.*

Malaika: [laughs so loudly but Tausi does not stop and she continues singing]

Tausi: *Yesu mwana wa Ngai osa ndaia.*

*Yesu mwana wa Ngai osa ndaia.* [She switches to another Swahili song]

*Asante Yesu kwa kuwa wewe ni mwema.*

*Asante Yesu kwa kuwa wewe ni mwema.*

Group: [laughs]

Mbula: *Wale wanacheka Tausi watachapwa.*

### **English translation**

{Jesus, son of God receive praise.

Jesus, son of God receive praise. [The other children in her group laugh when they hear the song].

Muendo: Stop joking that is God's song.

Malaika: [Laughs so loudly but Tausi does not stop, she continues singing]

Tausi: Jesus, son of God receive praise.

Jesus, son of God receive praise. [She switches to another Swahili song]

Thank you Jesus because you are good

Thank you Jesus because you are good

Group: [Laughs]

Mbula: Those who are laughing at Tausi will be punished.}

Once more the children brought in the classroom a church voice/practice through their singing. Not only was Tausi's voice being heard but a worshipper's voice in the church. Her friends also knew that church material was not to be joked with-it is God's. In fact, Tausi herself

was serious as she sang these church songs. This may be attributed to her upbringing. She attended Sunday school, her father was a church elder and her mother was a church choir member and from time to time she led church worship and praise (i.e. singing and praying). It is also interesting that when Tausi sang in Swahili and Gikuyu the other children joined in the singing but not when she sang in Kamba. I considered this to be because they did not want to break the school rules by singing/speaking in Kamba. But, more importantly, Tausi's identity as a Kamba and Swahili speaker and a Christian was revealed through her singing.

Moreover, the students were copying and doing Social Education exercise during remedial when all of a sudden I heard the following pop song in low tone from Katulu, Brenda and Mbula who were seated at the back. The teacher had left briefly.

Katulu, Brenda and Mbula:

*Mama Rhoda, utanikumbuka aaa*

[Mama Rhoda, you will remember me]

*Mama Rhoda, utanikumbuka aaa*

[Mama Rhoda, you will remember me eee]

Katulu and Brenda [continues]:

*Mama Rhoda, utanikumbuka aaa*

[Mama Rhoda, you will remember me]

*Dilidili Dilidili Dilidili* [sound of a guitar]

Mbula [forgets she was also singing]: *Unaimba hapa! Utachapwaa. Katulu utachapwa.*

*Nitawasema kwa mwalimu.* [You are singing here! You will be hit. You will be hit

Katulu. I will report you to the teacher].

Mutinda: *Nani? Mimi?* [Who? Me?]

Mbula: [To Mutinda] *we andika kazi, sitaki kukwongelesha.* [You write your work, I don't want to talk to you].

[Katulu and Brenda talking to each other. Brenda laughs so loudly at Katulu].

Katulu: [To Brenda] *unacheza na nani? Nitakuchapa. Wewe si mtoto.* [Whom are you playing with? I will hit you. You are not a child.]

Rafiki: [to Lina who is blocking the chalkboard] *we Lina toka hapo.* [You Lina come out of there].

Lina: [Moves away from the chalkboard]

Katulu: [*Still humming Mama Rhoda*]

[Changes the song and sings Christian song]

*Unastahili kuabudiwa* [You are worthy of praise]

*Unastahili Unastahili kuabudiwa* [You are worthy, you are worthy of praise]

Mbula: [interrupts Katulu's singing by making a face to her]

Katulu [to Mbula]: *Jinga* [Stupid].

[After a while the teacher is back in class and some students ask]

SS: *Mwalimu tutaandika sentence?* [Teacher, do we write down the sentence?]

Sometimes the children wrote only the answers without writing the complete sentence.

Mrs. Simba: *Andika sentence na majibu.* [Write both sentences and answers].

Katuku and Mbula: [Singing the National Anthem in low tones]

*Ee Mungu nduvu yetu, Ilete Baraka kwetu* [Oh God of all creation, Bless our land and nation]

*Haki iwe ngao na mlizi, Na tukae na amani* [Justice be our shield and defender, May we dwell in unity, Peace and liberty]

*Umoja na Uhuru, Raha tupate na starehe* [Plenty be found within our borders]. [In the afternoon session, the children had learned about the National Anthem and sang it as well].

[Majority of the students are done copying and lay their heads on their desks].

Mbula and Katulu: [Start another church song in low tones]:

*Mfalme Daudi aliimba, Mfalme Daudi aliimba* [King David sang, King David sang]

*Imbaa, Imbaa* [He sang, he sang].

*Mfalme Daudi aliicheza, Mfalme Daudi aliicheza* [King David danced, King David danced]

*Cheeza, cheeza* [Dance, dance].

Mrs Simba: Exits the classroom.

Looking at the above interaction, children are at play with language in the form of songs and talking to each other as well. The children have taken us to the world of pop music and back to the church through their singing. They have also revealed their Kenyan identity through singing the National Anthem. In their play through music they have opened a window for us as readers to see how their world looks.

As already stated, children also shared poems from time to time in the absence of the teacher or sometimes the Swahili teacher would ask them to recite. I will only include one poem which was unofficial. As already stated, I will not include the poems which were recited out of the Swahili teacher's instruction. See below for illustration:

The children have been given a past paper in Math to do problems. As Kasuku, Chiriku, Mbula and Tausi are doing the problems they recite the poem:

Poesha chai! [Cool your tea]

Poesha chai! [Cool your tea]

[They are quiet and resume their work].

In this little poem the children are at play during a Math lesson. Therefore, through songs and poems the children practiced their oral language skills. The songs also entertained them as they ventured in the world of language and literacy. Furthermore, through songs we got to know their world as well and their experiences in life.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have presented on the children's unofficial curriculum in this first grade classroom. The children were involved in the following practices which marked their unofficial curriculum: drawing, printing, and singing and recitation of poems. Through these practices I analyzed four major themes. These were children's community practices, children's experiences and identities, children's imagination, and children's use and understanding of language. Therefore, through the unofficial curriculum, I argue that the children were involved in meaningful learning which they could connect with by bringing in their experiences and imaginations. This curriculum also illustrates children taking agency in their own learning. In addition, through unofficial curriculum the children practiced oral and written language and this marked their development in both oral and written language. For example Rafiki wrote extended Swahili prose by the end of the term and also wrote down a memorized English poem.

Therefore, my argument is that through composing freely either through drawing, printing or singing, children engaged in meaningful learning. Further, Kamba marked the identity of these children; hence, it too was a resource not an impediment in their learning, as were English and Swahili. Despite the existence of 89 children in a crowded classroom and a curricular emphasis on passing tests, the potential exists in the unofficial work for multilingual play that is also a potential resource for the official one.



In the next chapter, I summarize this study and discuss its implications in research and teaching.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Summary, Discussions, and Implications**

The purpose of this study was to explore learning of a second language in a first grade classroom in Kenya through the lenses of a sociocultural and dialogic framework using ethnographic case study methods. To do this, I discussed the social, ideological, and physical contexts which surrounded language learning in this classroom. Therefore, in this chapter I will give a summary, discuss the findings, and the implications of this study in research and teaching.

#### **Summary and Discussion of Findings**

In chapter 4, I discussed the relevant national education documents from the Ministry of Education in trying to situate this study in Kenya's education system. The discussed documents seemed to privilege the monologic voice of the English language at the expense of Swahili and other mother tongues in the country. In addition, these documents, apart from the schemes of work, supported a child-centered teaching approach. In contrast, the schemes of work seemed to support teacher-dominated classroom interactions and practices with a passive child. Moreover, there was a disconnect between different documents operating in the country at the same time in terms of language policy and the curriculum expectations. Hence, this may have been one of the reasons why the teachers and schools may follow the policy which suits them at the expense of the other. In addition, these documents seemed not to have considered the social, physical, and ideological contexts of each classroom in the country. For example, crowded classrooms, lack of literacy and other educational materials, and local language policies which ban mother tongues in schools. Considerations of all these contexts may be a tough task, but it is deemed necessary for successful policies in the country. Otherwise the policies will just remain in the books but not in practice in the Kenyan schools.

In chapter 5, I discussed the social, physical, and ideological contexts which surrounded the classroom. I discussed the language policy and the practices of the Kalimani Primary School and the classroom's physical context. It was clear that Kalimani Primary School supported the English only policy and any child who spoke Kamba (the mother tongue) was punished. Swahili was initially assigned a communicative role in the school from grade 1-8; however from July, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010 it was stripped off this role from grade 4-8 and this role was given to English, though Swahili remained the language of communication in grades 1-3. The physical context was very constraining and seemed to have shaped the practices and interactions which took place in the classroom. There were many students in a crowded classroom. Also, there was a big shortage of literacy materials. These findings echo those which have been done in the Kenyan classrooms where lack of education materials have been cited (Bunyi, 2001; Jones, 2008). Therefore, this is a problem which needs to be addressed immediately. It is impossible to learn without language and literacy materials, not to mention without interactions.

In chapter 6, I discussed the “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973) and the “thick explanation” (Lewis & Watson-Gegeo, 2004) of the participants in first grade classroom. The findings were that the English classroom interactions and practices were shaped by the social, physical, and ideological contexts of teaching and learning within the social and physical contexts. Present were such factors as a crowded classroom with 89 children, the use of English as a language of instruction even though English was a second language, lack of literacy materials, and the ideological context which favored English and devalued mother tongues like Kamba. Moreover, an education which was geared towards passing of examinations and not acquiring knowledge for its sake led to classroom interactions and practices which privileged the voice of the textbook, the examination, and the teacher. The classroom interactions were

controlled by the teacher through the “traditional” classroom interaction pattern (Cazden, 2001), that is, IRE. The teacher asked questions, students answered, and teacher evaluated if the responses were right or wrong. Hence, these were monologic interactions because of the nature of IRE interaction pattern which usually does not go beyond evaluation. Therefore, there is no room for genuine dialogues. Classroom writing practices included copying off the board and the class text, filling in exercises, responding to board questions on grammatical elements, and dictation work. During reading and oral language activities, the children recited after the teacher and answered oral questions.

In trying to understand why such practices, which led to rote learning in the classroom occurred, I noted that the classroom could not be divorced from its physical, social, and ideological contexts. These contexts forced the English teacher (and her students) to do certain things in the classroom. For instance, the lack of literacy materials forced her to copy almost everything on the board. Because English was foreign to the children in the classroom, she was forced sometimes to code-switch to Swahili, but not to Kamba because Kamba was banned in the school compound. She never used Kamba in her instruction. Kamba resurfaced once or twice when she was punishing the children, just in the form of a sentence. Crowding and lack of textbooks led to choral reading and reciting after the teacher because the children could not see what was written in the few textbooks available in the classroom. Also, there was no physical space for discussions even if the teacher wanted. Thus, the classroom practices were shaped by the contexts which surrounded the classroom. The national documents also seemed to shape the classroom practices; for example, the schemes of work encouraged rote learning and a passive child.

In chapter 7, I discussed how the Swahili official oral and written curriculum was enacted. Although the classroom's physical context was restraining just like the physical context of the English classroom, the teacher used pedagogical approaches which included dialogic instruction where she encouraged use of voice, dialogue, and collaborative learning in her classroom. She also encouraged play. Moreover, she encouraged and listened to the children's stories. Through allowing classroom talk in her classroom, the children in the classroom expressed their agency in their learning. They drew, sang, danced, talked, wrote, and used their mother tongue, Kamba. The children, through the use of different media and language in their writing, were able to make meaning. The children also constructed meaning with their teacher as they engaged in the learning process. I, therefore, concluded that despite the space limitation and shortage of literacy materials, the teacher was able to employ and encourage diverse classroom interactions in her language instruction. In addition, the teacher-child relationship was that of a mediator or an expert and a novice; where the novice under the mediation of an expert moved from being a novice to an expert. I believe this was the case because the majority of these first graders when they joined grade one, did not know how to speak, read or write in Swahili. It was through the teacher's mediation through meaningful dialogic interactions that the children learned how to speak, read, and write in Swahili.

Lastly, chapter 8 was a discussion of the children's agency in their language learning and literacy development. This chapter focussed on the children's unofficial curriculum in this first grade classroom. The children were involved in the following practices which marked their unofficial curriculum: drawing, printing, and singing and recitation of poems. Through these practices I analyzed four major themes. These included children's community practices, children's experiences and identities, children's imagination, and children's use and

understanding of language. Therefore, through the unofficial curriculum, I argued that the children were involved in meaningful learning where they connected with their experiences and imaginations. In addition, through unofficial curriculum, the children practiced oral and written language and this marked their development in both oral and written language.

Therefore, my argument was that it is important to have time allocated in the classroom schedule when the children should be left free to compose freely either through drawing, printing or singing because through these activities they will have meaningful learning. Furthermore, the teachers should go over their work to offer support wherever necessary. Although I know with 89 children in a crowded classroom and where the emphasis is on passing tests, this will be a big challenge for the teacher.

In conclusion, this study first revealed that language learning cannot be divorced from its ideological, social, and physical contexts. For instance, language policy of the school and that of the country, crowded classrooms, and lack of literacy materials shaped language learning. Second, language learning is a social process where language learners need to have genuine dialogues with experts like teachers and peers in learning language. Third, oral and written language develops simultaneously; written language learning is supported by other media like drawing, singing, recitation of poetry etc.

### **Implications of the Study**

The findings in this dissertation have implications for and contribution to second language and literacy development research and teaching. The second language research strand, especially the findings in chapters 6, 7, and 8 enlighten the experiences of these second language learners which were embedded in their physical, social, and ideological worlds. These experiences included those of educational language policy which supported subtractive

bilingualism instead of additive bilingualism. Baker (2000) differentiates additive bilingualism and subtractive bilingualism as follows:

An additive bilingualism situation is where the addition of a second language and culture is unlikely to replace or displace the first language and culture. For example, English-speaking North Americans who learn a second language (e.g. French, Spanish) will not lose their English but gain another language and some of its attendant culture. .... In contrast, the learning of a majority second language may undermine a person's minority first language and culture, thus creating a subtractive situation. For example, an immigrant may find pressure to use the dominant language and feel embarrassment in using the home language (p. 58).

As already discussed, these Kenyan children were punished for speaking their mother tongue. The intention was therefore to kill children's mother tongues in support of English. This finding echoes other studies done in second language settings in Africa and elsewhere (Arthur, 2001; Bunyi, 2001; Jones, 2008; Lin, 2001; Ndayipfukamiye, 2001; Rubdy, 2008; Sandel, 2000; Vaish, 2008). My argument is that Kamba should be viewed as a resource not an impediment in their language learning. It should be valued and appreciated just as English and Swahili were valued in this classroom. Another experience of these second language learners was a constraining physical classroom setting with very many children with only two teachers (at different times) and a lack of literacy materials. This kind of physical setting seemed not to offer a space for meaningful classroom experiences especially during English learning. However, during Swahili learning, the children had meaningful learning despite the constraining physical environment because of the teacher's mediation role in her teaching. Hence, I concluded that the teacher's mediation in language and literacy development is paramount for meaningful learning to take place despite the prevailing physical circumstances.

In literacy development research strand, especially the findings of chapter 8, echoes sociocultural work which supports the notion that children literacy is embedded in their social relationships (Dyson, 2003, 2000, 1997, 1993, 1989; Dutro et al, 2004; Hudelson, 1994; Meier,

2000; Rogoff, 1990, 2003; Scribner & Cole, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978) and that written language development is supported by other media like drawing, singing, poetry, and body movements (Ballenger, 1999; Dyson, 1992, 1982; Gallas, 1994; Hubbard, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). Also, there is no clear cut division between oral and written language. They support each other and therefore, it is hard to separate them or to study each separately. Therefore, this study contributes in giving voice to the Kenyan children in dialogues of second language and literacy development by documenting their experiences both in official and unofficial curricula.

Finally, I hope that in Kenya there will be an ideological and a social change for the Kenyan government to formulate sound language and education policies and provide literacy materials and favorable environments for learning. Also, these findings especially chapters 7 and 8 manifest some of the meaningful practices in language and literacy development and I therefore, hope they will act as a guide to the Kenyan educators and elsewhere in their teaching.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This was an ethnographic case study and it faced some limitations associated with this kind of work. Mainly, it was embedded in the social and physical contexts of the classroom which I studied and social and ideological contexts of the school and the Kenyan nation as a whole. Also, this study used an interpretative inquiry approach, which means that the data presented originated from my own researcher interpretation of the observations, interviews, documents, and the children's writings. Hence, its findings may be unique to this particular case and may not generalize to other contexts. But, I believe this kind of research is very significant, both theoretically and pedagogically, because it provides a way to look at diverse second language teaching and learning in a classroom setting. One has to look at the dynamics of the case in terms of how it relates to the whole system. This is why I could not study the grade one



classroom without looking at what surrounds it. That is, the physical, social, ideological contexts and educational documents.

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## **Appendix A**

### **English Teacher's Interview Guide**

1. Describe to me what happens in your English lesson?
2. a) How do you teach speaking of English?  
b) How do you teach reading of English?  
c) How do you teach writing of English?
3. What activities do students carry out during a) speaking, b) reading, and c) writing lessons?
4. a) What kind of a student would you say is a good speaker of English?  
b) What kind of a student would you say is a good reader of English?  
c) What kind of a student would you say is a good writer of English?  
d) What kind of a student would you say is a good listener of English?
5. What language(s) do you use in your class? a) what is the role of English in your own class?  
b) what is the role of Swahili in your own class? and c) what is the role of Kamba in your class?)
6. What languages do students use in class, playground, in your church and at home?
7. How do you know that the students have understood what you teach them?
8. What materials do you use in your English lessons?
9. What materials are available for the students in English?
10. What are your teaching guidelines? In terms of how you teach and what you teach? What role does the National syllabus play and language policy documents?
11. a) According to the Kenyan language policy, English should be the medium of instruction from standard four in all schools, what is your opinion about this policy?

b) In your school practice and policy, there is no teaching of Kamba in lower Primary classes even though the population of the non-Kambas is negligible, what are your views concerning your school's language policy and practice?

c) If a student speaks Kamba at school is punished, what is your opinion about this practice?

12. Do you have free writing time when the students can write on anything they wish to, exercise their imagination, and have time to share what they have written down with their classmates? If yes, describe that moment, if not, why?

13. How do you decide what textbooks and other materials to be used in your classroom?

14. What challenges do you face in your English teaching?

15. Do you have any other information, which may help me in learning about language teaching in your school and in Kenya?

## **Appendix B**

### **Swahili Teacher's Interview Guide**

1. Describe to me what happens in your Swahili class?
2. a) How do you teach speaking of Swahili?  
b) How do you teach reading of Swahili?  
c) How do you teach writing of Swahili?
3. What activities do students carry out during a) speaking, b) reading, and c) writing lessons?
4. a) What kind of a student would you say is a good speaker of Swahili?  
b) What kind of a student would you say is a good reader of Swahili?  
c) What kind of a student would you say is a good writer of Swahili?  
d) What kind of a student would you say is a good listener of Swahili?
5. What language(s) do you use in your class? a) what is the role of Swahili in your own class?  
b) what is the role of English in your own class? and c) what is the role of Kamba in your class?)
6. What languages do students use in class, playground, in your church (please indicate the church), and at home?
7. How do you know that the students have understood what you teach them?
8. What materials do you use in your Swahili lessons?
9. What materials are available for the students in Swahili?
10. What are your teaching guidelines? In terms of how you teach and what you teach? What role does the National syllabus play and language policy documents?
11. a) According to the Kenyan language policy, English should be the medium of instruction from standard four in all schools, what is your opinion about this policy?

b) In your school practice and policy, there is no teaching of Kikamba in lower Primary classes even though the population of the non-Kambas is negligible, what are your views concerning your school's language policy and practice?

c) If a student speaks Kamba at school is punished, what is your opinion about this practice?

12. Do you have free writing time when the students can write on anything they wish to, exercise their imagination, and have time to share what they have written down with their classmates? If yes, describe that moment, if not, why?

13. How do you decide what textbooks and other materials to be used in your classroom?

14. What challenges do you face in your Swahili teaching?

15. Do you have any other information, which may help me in learning about language teaching in your school and in Kenya?

## **Appendix C**

### **Student's Interview Guide**

1. What do you like about the English class?
2. What do you do in your English classes?
3. Do you use Kamba in school? If yes, when? If no, why?
4. a) Tell me about a day that you really liked in English class.  
b) Tell me about a day when you did not like it.
5. a) How do you learn speaking of English?  
b) How do you learn reading of English?  
c) How do you learn writing of English?
6. What activities do carry out during a) speaking, b) reading, and c) writing lessons?
7. a) What kind of a student would you say is a good speaker of English?  
b) What kind of a student would you say is a good reader of English?  
c) What kind of a student would you say is a good writer of English?  
d) What kind of a student would you say is a good listener of English?
8. What kind of a teacher would you say is a good teacher of English?
9. Tell me what you like best about your school.
10. Tell me what you would like to change about your school.
11. What challenges do you face in your English learning and in your schooling in general?
12. Any other information you would me to know about your English learning and school?

## **Appendix D**

### **School Principal's Interview Guide**

1. When did the school start?
2. When did the school become a boarding school and why?
3. How many borders and how many day scholars?
4. What is the enrolment of the school?
5. (a) Who is the sponsor of the school?  
(b) What is the sponsor's role?
6. What is the admission criterion for standard one and other classes?
7. How many teachers do you have and what are their qualifications?
8. How many support staff do you have and what are their responsibilities in the school?
9. (a) How is the performance of the school from standard one to eight over the years?  
(b) I have realized the school buys exams when did this start, and why?
10. (a) What co-curriculum activities does the school have?  
(b) How is the school's performance in co- curriculum competitions?
11. (a) Has the school not been teaching Kamba and teaching in Kamba since it's beginning?  
(b) Why does the school not teach Kamba or instruct in Kamba in grades 1-3?  
(c) What happens if a child speaks in Kikamba with a teacher around or a prefect?
12. What role does English language play in the school? What about Swahili and Kamba?
13. Who decides language of instruction in the school?
14. I have realized there is a great shortage of textbooks in standard one especially English, Math, and Social Education and Ethics, what measures is the administration taking to eradicate or reduce this problem?

15. The syllabus indicates Creative Arts and Physical Education must be taught, however, I have realized these subjects are not taught, why?

16. Standard one has many children and I have realized is a big challenge for one teacher, usually, the children at the back pay little attention. What should be done?

17. As an administration, what challenges do you face in running of the school?



## **Appendix E**

### **Parent's Interview Guide**

**Parent's profession** \_\_\_\_\_

1. What do you think of your child's schooling?
2. Do you visit your child's classroom? If yes, when? If not, why?
3. What activities is your child involved in after school?
4. What academic materials are available at home for your child?
5. What language(s) does your child speak at home? at the church?
6. a) In your child's school, there is no teaching of Kamba, what is your opinion about this?  
b) If a child speaks Kamba at school she or he is punished, what do you think about this?  
c) Pupils who break the school rules are usually punished by caning them, what is your opinion about this practice?
7. According to Kenya's National language policy, English should be the language of instruction from standard four, what is your opinion about this?
8. a) What challenges does your child face in the school?  
b) What challenges do you face in your child's schooling?
9. Do you have any other information, which may help me understand your child's learning better?

## Appendix F

### Consent Letter for the School Principal

May 10, 2010

Dear Headmistress:

My name is Esther Mukewa Lisanza and I am a graduate student from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois, USA. My advisor, Dr. Anne Dyson and I would like to include your Standard one pupils in a research project on language learning and literacy. We do not anticipate any risk greater than normal life and pupils may benefit from this research by becoming better language learners because they know they are being observed. These language and literacy sessions will be audio recorded.

The children's participation in this project is completely voluntary. In addition to your permission, the parents of the concerned children and the children themselves will also be asked if they would like to take part or allow their children to participate in this project. Only those children whose parents want them to participate and the children themselves who want to participate will do so. Any child may stop taking part in the study at any time. The choice to participate or not will not impact the child's grades or status at school. The audio records and all other information that is obtained during this research project will be kept strictly secure and will not become a part of the child's school record. The recorded materials will be kept in a locked file cabinet and will be accessible only to project personnel. The recorded materials will be transcribed and coded to remove children's names and will be erased after the project is completed.

The results of this study may be used for a dissertation, a scholarly report, journal article and conference presentation. Pseudonyms will be substituted for the names of children participating in the project.

In the space at the bottom of this letter, please indicate whether you do or do not want your school to participate in this project. Return one copy to me and keep the second copy for your records. If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact us either by mail, e-mail, or telephone.

Sincerely,

Esther Mukewa Lisanza, Research Assistant  
254-720251548  
emukewa2@illinois.edu

Anne Dyson, Professor  
(217)244-3389  
ahdyson@illinois.edu

\*\*\*\*\*

I do/do not (circle one) give permission for my school \_\_\_\_\_ (name of the school) to participate in the research project described above.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ School head's signature

If you have any questions or concerns about this research project please contact Anne Robertson, Bureau of Educational Research, 217-333-3023, or [arobrtsn@uiuc.edu](mailto:arobrtsn@uiuc.edu) or the Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 or [irb@uiuc.edu](mailto:irb@uiuc.edu)

## Appendix G

### Consent Letter for the Parent (in Swahili)

10, Mei, 2010

Kwa Mzazi:

Jina langu ni Esther Mukewa Lisanza na mimi ni mwanafunzi katika Idara ya elimu, chuo kikuu cha Illinois katika Amerika. Mimi na mshauri wangu, Dkt. Anne Dyson tungetaka kufanya kazi na mtoto wako pamoja na wanafunzi wenzake katika utafiti ambao unaangazia lugha na kujifunza kusoma na kuandika. Hatutarajii madhara yoyote na mtoto wako anaweza kufaidika kutokana na utafiti huu kwa kuwa mwandishi mwema kwa sababu anajua anaangaliwa. Huu ujifunzaji wa lugha na uandishi utarekodiwa kwenye kanda.

Hakuna kulazimishwa kwa mtoto katika utafiti huu. Pamoja na ruhusa yako, pia mtoto ataulizwa kama anataka kujiunga na utafiti huu. Vilevile anaweza kuacha wakati wowote. Uchaguzi wa mtoto wa kushiriki au kutoshiriki hakutamuathiri mtoto kwa njia yoyote shuleni. Habari zote ambazo zimenaswa na kunakiliwa vitatuzwa vizuri na zitaonekana tu na wenye kufanya huu utafiti. Majina bandia yatatumika katika habari hizi.

Pia nitafanya mahojiano na wewe kabla ya utafiti huu kuisha.

Matokeo ya utafiti huu yanaweza kutumka katika tasnifu, repoti ya kielimu, jarida au katika walsha. Majina bandia yatatumika.

Hapo chini, tafadhali onyesha ikiwa unataka mtoto wako kuwa au kutokuwa katika mradi huu. Kama una maswali yoyote kuhusu mradi huu, tafadhali wasiliana nasi kwa barua, barua pepe, au simu.

Wako waaminifu,

Esther Mukewa Lisanza, Mtafiti  
254-720251548  
emukewa2@illinois.edu

Anne Dyson, Profesa  
011-217-244-3389  
ahdyson@illinois.edu

\*\*\*\*\*

Ndio/la (chagua moja) nampa mtoto wangu ruhusa \_\_\_\_\_ (jina la mtoto) kushiriki katika mradi ulioelezewa hapo juu.

\_\_\_\_\_ Tarehe \_\_\_\_\_ sahihi ya mzazi

Ndio/la (chagua moja) nampa mtoto wangu ruhusa \_\_\_\_\_ (jina la mtoto) kurekodiwa.

\_\_\_\_\_ tarehe \_\_\_\_\_ sahihi ya mzazi

Ndio/la (chagua moja) napatiana ruhusa \_\_\_\_\_ kuhojiwa tarehe

\_\_\_\_\_

Kama una maswali kuhusu haki zako katika utafiti tafadhali wasiliana na Anne Robertson,

Bureau of Educational Research, 011-217-333-3023, au [arobrtsn@uiuc.edu](mailto:arobrtsn@uiuc.edu) au Institutional Review Board kwa 217-333-2670 au [irb@uiuc.edu](mailto:irb@uiuc.edu)

## Appendix H

### Consent Letter for the Classroom Teacher

May 10, 2010

Dear Classroom Teacher:

My name is Esther Mukewa Lisanza and I am a graduate student from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois, USA. My advisor, Dr. Anne Dyson and I would like to include your Standard one classroom in a research project on language learning and literacy. We do not anticipate any risk greater than normal life and pupils may benefit from this research by becoming better language learners because they know they are being observed. These language and literacy sessions will be audio recorded.

The children's and your participation in this project is completely voluntary. In addition to your permission, the parents of the concerned children and the children themselves will also be asked if they would like to take part or allow their children to participate in this project. Only those children whose parents want them to participate and the children themselves who want to participate will do so. Any child may stop taking part in the study at any time. The choice to participate or not will not impact the child's grades or status at school. The recorded and all other information that is obtained during this research project will be kept strictly secure and will not become a part of the child's school record. The audio-recorded materials will be kept in a password-protected computer and will be accessible only to project personnel. The recorded materials will be transcribed and coded to remove children's and your names and will be erased after the project is completed.

I will also carry out an interview with you in one of the months before the project is over.

The results of this study may be used for a dissertation, a scholarly report, journal article and conference presentation. Pseudonyms will be substituted for the names of children and teacher participating in the project.

In the space at the bottom of this letter, please indicate whether you do or do not want your classroom to participate in this project or to be interviewed. Return one copy to me and keep the second copy for your records. If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact us either by mail, e-mail, or telephone.

Sincerely,

Esther Mukewa Lisanza, Research Assistant  
254-720251548  
emukewa2@illinois.edu

Anne Dyson, Professor  
011-217-244-3389  
ahdyson@illinois.edu

\*\*\*\*\*

I do/do not (circle one) give permission for my classroom \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the research project described above.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ classroom's teacher signature

I do/do not (circle one) give permission to be interviewed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I do/do not (circle one) give permission for classroom audio-recording

Date \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any questions or concerns about this research project please contact Anne Robertson, Bureau of Educational Research, 011- 217-333-3023, or [arobrtsn@uiuc.edu](mailto:arobrtsn@uiuc.edu) or the Institutional Review Board at 011- 217-333-2670 or [irb@uiuc.edu](mailto:irb@uiuc.edu)

## Appendix I

### Consent Letter for the Pupil

May 10, 2010

Dear pupil:

Hi! My name is Esther Mukewa Lisanza from the University of Illinois, USA, and I am here in your classroom carrying out a research about language learning and literacy. If you do this project, I will observe you in your classroom. I will audio record these lessons so that I can look at them later.

Your participation in this project is voluntary-this means that you can decide whether or not you want to do this project. If you want to stop doing the project at any time, you can stop. The audio records and all the other information from this project will be kept private and secure. The audio records will be kept in a password protected computer and only my advisor and I will be able to look at them. The audiorecords will be coded to remove your names and will be erased after the project is finished. This project won't go on your school record.

If you have any questions, you can call me at 254-720251548 or e-mail me at [emukewa2@illinois.edu](mailto:emukewa2@illinois.edu), or call Prof. Dyson at (217) 244-244-3389 or e-mail her at [ahdyson@illinois.edu](mailto:ahdyson@illinois.edu) or you can ask me questions when I come to your class.

---

Pupil's Signature

Date

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant please contact Anne Robertson, Bureau of Educational Research, 217-333-3023, or [arobrtsn@uiuc.edu](mailto:arobrtsn@uiuc.edu) or the Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 or [irb@uiuc.edu](mailto:irb@uiuc.edu)



# Appendix J

Exam Sample\_2007

**SCHOOL BASED EVALUATION TEST I**

**STD 1 TERM 3 2007**

**ENGLISH**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**Dictation.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_



2. \_\_\_\_\_



3. \_\_\_\_\_


4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Name the pictures.**

6.  7. 

8.  9. 

10. 

(ball, ten, flower, clock, spoon)  
**Write in plurals.**

11. Apple \_\_\_\_\_

12. Glass \_\_\_\_\_

13. Baby \_\_\_\_\_

14. Man \_\_\_\_\_

15. House \_\_\_\_\_

**Put 'a' or 'an'**

16. \_\_\_\_\_ arm chair.

17. \_\_\_\_\_ bean bag.

18. \_\_\_\_\_ old man.

19. \_\_\_\_\_ shelf.

20. \_\_\_\_\_ flower vase.

**Put 'am' 'is' or 'are'.**

21. We \_\_\_\_\_ good children.

22. He \_\_\_\_\_ my brother.

23. I \_\_\_\_\_ seven years old.

24. These \_\_\_\_\_ good flowers.

25. She \_\_\_\_\_ a noisy girl.

**Make words using these sounds**

26. oo \_\_\_\_\_

27. th \_\_\_\_\_

28. ll \_\_\_\_\_

29. ee \_\_\_\_\_

30. sh \_\_\_\_\_

**Draw.**

31. Dress \_\_\_\_\_ 32. Table \_\_\_\_\_

33. Leaf \_\_\_\_\_ 34. Cup \_\_\_\_\_

35. Church \_\_\_\_\_

**Fill in the missing letters.**

36. F \_\_\_\_\_ sh

37. Trai \_\_\_\_\_

38. Moth \_\_\_\_\_ r

39. Teach \_\_\_\_\_ r

40. Hou \_\_\_\_\_ e

**Write the opposites.**

41. Come \_\_\_\_\_

42. Queen \_\_\_\_\_

43. Happy \_\_\_\_\_

44. Hot \_\_\_\_\_

45. Daughter \_\_\_\_\_

(cold, sad, king, son, go)  
**Write well.**

46. tepla \_\_\_\_\_

47. oobk \_\_\_\_\_

48. enp \_\_\_\_\_

49. airch \_\_\_\_\_






50. oodg \_\_\_\_\_

KPS 3 - ENGLISH 1/07



# Appendix K

## Exam Sample\_2008\_page 1

STANDARD ONE - YEAR 2008	
ENGLISH	
NAME.....	SCHOOL.....
<p><b>Dictation</b></p> <p>1. <u>Table</u></p> <p>2. <u>Woman</u></p> <p>3. <u>Ball</u></p> <p>4. <u>Pencil</u></p> <p>5. _____</p> <p><b>Write in small letters</b></p> <p>e.g GIRL - girl</p> <p>6. MOTHER - _____</p> <p>7. HOUSE - _____</p> <p>8. CHAIR - _____</p> <p>9. MAN - _____</p> <p>10. DOOR - _____</p> <p><b>Put "a" or "an"</b></p> <p>11. _____ elephant</p> <p>12. _____ basket</p> <p>13. _____ ox</p> <p>14. _____ banana</p> <p>15. _____ onion</p>	<p><b>Write correctly</b></p> <p>16. therfa - _____</p> <p>17. werflo - _____</p> <p>18. lkmi- _____</p> <p>19. yob- _____</p> <p>20. doof - _____</p> <p><b>Name the pictures</b></p> <p>21.  _____</p> <p>22.  _____</p> <p>23.  _____</p> <p>24.  _____</p> <p>25.  _____</p>

## Appendix L

### Exam Sample\_2008\_page 2

#### Add- ing e.g

play - playing

26. pray \_\_\_\_\_  
27. sleep \_\_\_\_\_  
28. talk \_\_\_\_\_  
29. sing \_\_\_\_\_  
30. Work \_\_\_\_\_

#### Write in plural

box - boxes

31. fox \_\_\_\_\_  
32. foot \_\_\_\_\_  
33. child \_\_\_\_\_  
34. foot \_\_\_\_\_  
35. man \_\_\_\_\_

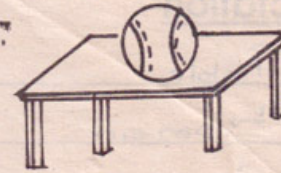
#### Write the opposite

36. stand \_\_\_\_\_  
37. up \_\_\_\_\_  
38. man \_\_\_\_\_  
39. boy \_\_\_\_\_  
40. open \_\_\_\_\_  
41. hot \_\_\_\_\_

#### Use "in" or "on" under



42. The water is \_\_\_\_\_ the cup.



43. The ball is \_\_\_\_\_ the table



44. The girl is \_\_\_\_\_ the tree.

45. There are \_\_\_\_\_ day in a week

#### Write the past tense

46. go \_\_\_\_\_  
47. close \_\_\_\_\_  
48. Jump \_\_\_\_\_  
49. come \_\_\_\_\_  
50. cook \_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix M**

**Classroom Arrangement**

